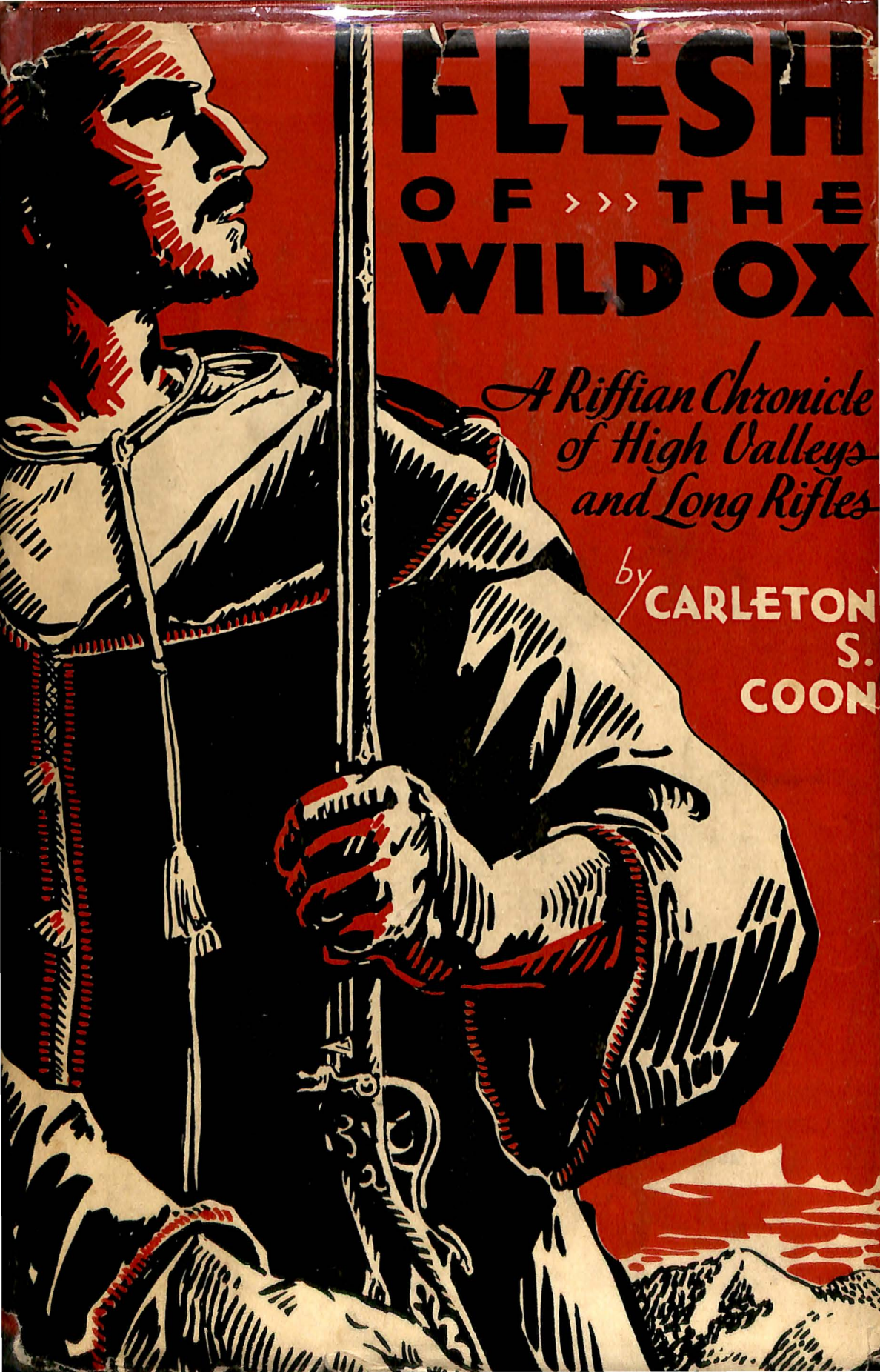
FLESH
OF THE
WILD OX
A Riffian Chronicle
of High Valleys
and Long Rifles
by CARLETON
S.
COON

FLESH OF THE WILD OX

A Riffian Chronicle of High Valleys and Long Rifles

BY

CARLETON STEVENS COON

With a Foreword by EARNEST ALBERT HOOTON, Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University, *and Illustrated by* RUTH REEVES

WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY
NEW YORK MCMXXXII

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY
QUINN & BODEN COMPANY, INC.
RAHWAY, N. J.

"They that partake of the flesh of the wild ox grow in courage, and he who eats of its brain becomes crafty."

—Riffian Proverb

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FOREWORD

The Moroccan Rif is a strip of rugged country washed by the Mediterranean. It is inhabited by Berbers—blond and brunet whites—who speak a Hamitic language and profess Islam. They are not Arabs although they owe their religion to these Semitic invaders. Up to a few years ago the Rif was an area practically unknown to Europeans. Its free and belligerent occupants made their own arms and ammunition; they snapped their flint-locks at the Spaniards and thumbed their noses at the Sultan. When there were no foreign invaders to repel, they kept fit and cheerful by indulging in tribal wars, feuds, and other homicidal recreations. The scant and unreliable information concerning Riffian customs and culture seemed to indicate that they of all North Africans best preserved their archaic Berber mode of life, almost unadulterated by Mohammedanism.

In a course on North Africa given at Harvard, I used to spend one or two lectures telling what I did not know about the Riffians. Their sanguinary sociology, blue eyes, blond hair, and scorn for Europeans fired the imagination of at least one young anthropologist seeking for kindred spirits among the wilder whites. Carleton Stevens Coon determined to beard the Riffian in his den. I aided and abetted him in the plotting of his expedition, but was not accessory to his acquisition, shortly before his departure, of a young and beautiful wife who insisted on accompanying him. It is no part of this foreword

to recount the adventures of these young pioneers in the Rif. Nor can I explain why the Riffians failed to dispose of Coon and to keep his wife. The fall of 1926 and the winter and spring of 1927 were spent by the intrepid couple in plodding about this unknown and dangerous country, measuring Riffians and learning their quaint customs. They returned with a stupendous amount of scientific data. In the summer of 1928 another expedition to the Rif completed their survey, and they brought home with them a pet Riffian—a charming young man with a formidable past.

Dr. Coon has published the scientific results of his Riffian studies in a great monograph (Harvard African Studies, Vol. IX). "Flesh of the Wild Ox" is a literary by-product of his intimate knowledge of these magnificent barbarians. Although it was written in story form, it is an authentic portrait of Riffian life, based upon oral tradition of the legendary history of the Rif. Not all of the incidents related in this book are ascribed to the individuals connected with them in Riffian lore, but all of them are genuine and unembellished. This stark tale, shot through with grim humor, defines the Riffian character much more clearly than could any verbal description.

The first part of the book is a historical chronicle centered about characters from successive generations of a Riffian family. It is a continuous narrative of sustained interest and factual validity, leading to the tragic events of the recent Riffian war which form the background for the action of the story.

I have no patience with those who sentimentalise about savages, but the passing of Riffian independence

has brought about the disintegration of a sturdy culture which tended to foster most of the virtues which Anglo-Saxons admire. The Heroic Age in Morocco has been terminated by the greed of militaristic European nations. The Spartans of North Africa have suffered their Thermopylæ.

EARNEST ALBERT HOOTON,
Professor of Anthropology,
Harvard University.

PART ONE

THE VALE OF IHERRUSHEN

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

It was long ago when these things took place. Up the flank of the Noisy Mountain toiled a man, a woman, a cow, and a dog. The man was Abd el Mumen, the woman his wife, and the dog and cow his chattels. Three weeks had passed since they had left their tent on the flat land to the east. Life was growing too difficult down there on the plain, where rain fell but sparingly, and wells were not near together. There were too many men and too many women. His neighbours' flocks had eaten his barley and the horses of the new people, those Arabs who never washed and were content to make their holy ablutions with sand, had trampled down his rye.

Wherefore Abd el Mumen and his wife had departed from their own country, seeking a place in the empty mountains in which they might work in peace. They had been pleased with the Vale of Ikaroen which gleamed beneath them now, a chain of green splotches along a string of glinting water, but finding it already lined with houses, had crossed its head to the lower spurs of the Noisy Mountain.

It was hot here on the bare rocks which, piled one upon the next, made leading the cow difficult. There was no path over the Noisy Mountain for but few men had ever climbed it. Abd el Mumen sought the crevices

between the boulders, climbing and zigzagging, half hauling the cow by its rope of halfa grass. Abd el Mumen's feet did not slip on the rocks because they were shod with grass sandals, tied to his ankles by two cords crossing his toes. He was a tall man, and his lean muscles did not tire with the climbing. That of his body which the sun was wont to strike had been burnt a light brown, the colour of his outer garment, a short woollen tunic with a capacious hood and loose sleeves; but his thighs, bared momentarily in the climbing, were whiter. Upon his head he wore nothing, and his scalp was shaven, all but the back of it, whence hung a long lock of tawny hair, braided, slapping across the hood of his cloak as he went upward.

He paused a moment to look down upon the valley which he had passed, and to let his wife catch up with him. The face of Abd el Mumen was a striking one, with heavy brows over deep-set grey eyes, squinting a little from the glare, an arched nose with thin nostrils, and lips sheltered by an uncut Viking's moustache of yellow, over a patriarchal beard of reddish brown. It was a face befitting the ancestor of the tribe which was to follow him.

At length his wife had reached him. She was young and not long married. Wrinkles had not yet come to pinch out the vascular fulness of her cheeks, nor had childbearing dried and flattened her breasts, nor slowed her walk, which was now retarded only by reason of her burdens.

In one hand she carried a broad-bladed hoe; in the other two vessels of clay, one filled with almonds, and the other with dried peppers. To her back was strapped

a bag full of seed grain wherefrom Abd el Mumen intended to make flourish the sides of the water-courses in the new place they were seeking.

As they reached the top of the Noisy Mountain, the sun was near sinking behind one of the many peaks which, to Abd el Mumen's surprise, seemed almost to encircle them. They walked rapidly down what seemed a crease in one of the mountains until they came to a place of grass, spongy and cool with water. The dog ran back and upward behind some rocks, and Abd el Mumen, following him, found him lapping eagerly from a small, clear spring. Abd el Mumen drove the dog away with a stone, lest he muddy the water.

"We shall rest here the night," said Abd el Mumen, whereupon his wife set down her hoe and her pots, and eased the burden from her back. Dumping the almonds into a cloth which had been tucked under her waistband, she filled the pot with water and gave this to her husband to drink. When he had finished he passed it to her, and wiped his moustache on the sleeve of his cloak.

He collected dry twigs from the underneaths of scrub cedar trees, and stripped off a few shreds of bark to serve as tinder. From somewhere under his cloak he produced a long curved knife with a simple bone handle, and a piece of flint, which perhaps had served as knife to some earlier man before him. Striking the flint on the notched tang of his knife, Abd el Mumen soon had started a fire, and his wife set to simmering over it the water pot full of porridge, which she had compounded of crushed barley grains and water, livened by a crumpled pepper. Simple as the fare was, they must partake

of it and be content, until the first harvest should see them garnering more appetizing things.

In the summer the Rif sees little twilight. Soon darkness had come upon them sitting there on either side of the three rocks which made their hearth, and a cold came upon them likewise, a cold such as they had seldom felt down on the plain. At times their dog would rise on his front paws, sniffing, and the yellow mane along the crest of his thin back would bristle. The howling of some fierce mountain cat disturbed their meditation, and the dog leapt about barking furiously, although he did not venture from the ring of fire-glow.

Thus they passed their first night alone together in this bleak, high place, huddling as close to one another as they could, and sleeping little.

The darkness left the Noisy Mountain as quickly as it had come. Everything was wet, and, carried on the moist wind, the smell of the cedar scrub was sweet. Their cow, her muzzle deep in the lush green about the spring, walked to and fro slowly, lifting up each hoof with a distinct effort, and letting it down again with a splash. As she sidled nearer the water, a slim frog, fearing her hoofs, leaped from the edge into the midst of the pool and disappeared under a series of concentric ripples.

"Abd el Mumen!" cried the woman, "give me your knife and I will spit the frog on it. Its hind legs are sweet."

"Leave it," replied her husband. "Do you not know the difference between the unclean and the clean? The frog is fit food for Christian or for Jew, but our Lord Mohammed has said that it shall not enter the stomach

of any who believes. Your father was tardy in his conversion and failed to learn the Book, so as to give instruction to his children."

They strode down the gully that was later to be called Tighza. There was no flat place in it; all was sheer granite, falling from a lofty summit to a cavernous stream bed where a feeble trickle of water leaped and rushed over the rocks, making more noise than became its size, its puny crashings and tumblings echoing and re-echoing to the top.

They picked their way over the smooth boulders, pulling and pushing the cow, and helping the dog where the rocks were too slippery for it to scramble. It was cold down here in the bottom, for no beam of sunlight shone more than halfway down the gorge.

When they had been clambering in this fashion for more than an hour, a voice startled them, a voice deep-sounding like ritual, calling out to them in the Shillhah of their own country: "Peace be upon you, Children of Adam, and why do you pass in this deserted place?"

They glanced up quickly to the rock wall whence this sound had come, and saw, in the mouth of a shallow rock-shelter above their heads, a lean face set in a heavy beard of white, the face of a peaceful and a holy man, whose meagre body was half covered with the ragged vestiges of garments which had once resembled those worn by Abd el Mumen.

"And who are you, my grandfather?" asked Abd el Mumen.

"I am Misaud, a holy one of God. It will soon be time for the second prayer, and if you are true believers come

and sit with me that I may examine the extent of your instruction."

Abd el Mumen, having tied his cow to a branch of dead cedar caught between two rocks over the stream bed, climbed up to the saint's refuge, and his wife after him.

"Why have you wandered this way?" asked Sidi Misaud, when the younger man was seated.

"My wife and I have set forth to find a new valley wherein we may toil in peace and amass fuller granaries and larders for those whom we shall beget there."

Sidi Misaud, looking upward at the progress of the line which separated light from shadow on the rock above him, saw that it was time for prayer. He held up the first finger of his right hand, a lean, white finger with a long nail.

Abd el Mumen intoned: "La ilahu illa Illahi." Then, upon the raising of the second finger: "Wa Muhammadu Rasulu 'Llahi." It was a curious thing, how much these men honoured the religion brought them by the Arabs, whom they so heartily despised.

"You recite it well," said the saint, "but do you know what it means?"

"It means," said Abd el Mumen, "that there is no god saving The God, and that a certain Mohammed is the messenger of The God. I have spoken little with the men from the East and know not the interpretation of each separate word. I learned it as a whole thing, as I learned the other prayers, each with its meaning. Beyond this I have no desire to acquaint myself with the speech of the Arabs, which sounds more like noises of goats than talk of men."

"Be not too hard upon them," said the saint, "for without them we should remain as benighted as the heathen who dwell at the foot of this ravine."

"What? Are there men there?"

The expression on Abd el Mumen's face became one of anxiety and of disappointment. He had dreamed of a new land, untrodden by men, where he could establish himself as a patriarch.

"What are these men, these heathen, like?"

"They are wizards of great stature who live in white houses and lead the water cunningly up the sides of gorges so as to moisten their fields with it. I know not what faith they hold to, for they are unbelievers and their speech is strange to me. I stayed among them for a day when I first came here, and attempted to convert them. They were friendly at first and fed me well, but when I knelt down to pray their manner changed; they cast me out and pelted me with stones. So I fled to this cave. Here I have prayed to God day and night, without moving farther away than the pool yonder where your cow is tied. There I descend daily to drink and fetch water for my ablutions."

"Perhaps they thought your prostrations were meant to enchant them," suggested Abd el Mumen.

"Beyond the valley of these heathen," continued the saint, "lies a region of mountains as high as these, and also of rich meadows. Here in high valleys live true men, children of Adam, but not believers. Men say that they are Christians, people who have been led astray by sorcerers and wizards who render themselves invulnerable by their phylactery, which is two sticks of wood

fastened one across the other. This they worship and carry, as we do beads."

"What is their speech?"

"Our own Shillhah."

There was still one question which puzzled Abd el Mumen above all others; which was, whence came the food of this holy one? When he had asked it, the reply astonished him.

"Every evening," declared the saint, "in reward for my devotions, the good God wafts down to me as much bread as I can eat, thin, crisp loaves, moistened with butter and with honey."

Marvelling at this divine beneficence, Abd el Mumen and his wife climbed down from the rock shelter to the trail, and continued their journey. The two of them travelled downward until they came into a broader valley, and finally reached the flat places at the confluence of two rivers, where were the habitations of men. Fine houses stood there, built of cribwork and of timber, with sloping, shingled roofs, and cunningly carved lintels to the doors. In the terraces above the pebbly watercourse women were bending over, picking weeds from among the tender green shoots which had but recently thrust themselves up through the rich moist soil. Up in an olive tree Abd el Mumen descried a thickset man in a short tunic, pruning the outer branches with a curved knife. Higher up, in a cleft of rock, the shimmering flight of bees indicated the presence of honey. Two small girls, dressed in coarse, striped garments, led a cow out of the path so that Abd el Mumen and his small procession might pass. Standing there agape, holding the cow by horns and tail, these small women eyed the new-

comers with wonder. Abd el Mumen saluted them with a polite greeting, which was not returned.

Farther along, as they were walking past the houses, a full-breasted sow arose grunting from the edge of the stream bed, and ran, squirting fine streams of milk from her swollen dugs, across the trail. Her sleek progeny scampered after her.

"May God punish these heathen!" exclaimed Abd el Mumen. "Verily the sight of an unclean beast is a loathsome thing."

When the wanderers came to the place where the two rivers joined they turned to the left and followed the other stream upwards. As the children of their children tell the tale, through the mist of seven generations, this journey up the Vale of Iherrushen partook of the nature of a miracle. It was a wondrous valley, narrow yet broad enough for terracing, with its sides thickly timbered in cedar and in pine. Gaily coloured birds perched on the limbs of these, cocking their heads sidewise as they pecked at the cones.

As Abd el Mumen and his wife plodded upstream, wet to the knees, bloody of feet, and speechless with awe, the birds arose screaming, stretched their flamboyant wings, and flew further up to settle in more distant trees. Foxes stood in their burrows staring and sniffing, and a leering hyæna slunk ahead of them in the shadow of an overhanging bank. On a rock in the middle of the stream sat a lion, tawny maned. When he spied the invaders, he paused long enough to bare his white teeth in a mighty roar, which made the led cow pull back in terror on her rope. The lion then turned his back and retreated up-

stream, his tail slapping back and forth in anger behind him.

Abd el Mumen had never before seen a lion, nor had his wife, yet he did not falter, for the wonder of the valley had inspired him beyond fear—he felt like a prophet of the Book performing deeds long foretold.

At length the water divided, and between the two rivers a flat triangle of rich soil gave promise of fruitfulness. To the right of the confluence the green slope was gentler than at any other place yet encountered in this magic valley. A bit ahead a dark slash in the mountain indicated the joining-place of another and smaller stream.

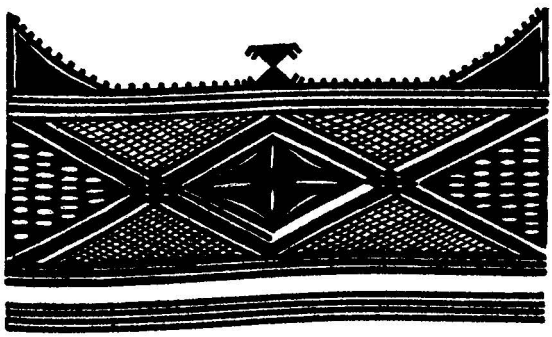
Rounding the bend in the river to the right, they beheld a sight such as it had seldom been the lot of man to see. Up above where the small stream joined the larger stretched a clear space, void of trees, and on this space stood a mosque, marvellously white and even-walled, tight roofed and fronted by a pillared porch. The door stood ajar, and Abd el Mumen climbed upward and approached it, scuffing off his sandals, and having entered, knelt toward the east and gave speech to a torrent of prayer which welled up from him so strongly that he felt it would carry his throat out through his mouth with the words.

No man was in this place, nor was the mosque any work of man, but a miracle placed there by God for the service of the godly, for the prayers of those to come from Abd el Mumen's loins, who would be a great company and an example of piety, as their ancestor in his pristine fulness of spirit then fancied them.

Here Abd el Mumen and his wife settled, building themselves a house of stone and timber, prying and roll-

ing stones, erecting terraces, filling these with earth from the banks of the stream, hewing out irrigation ditches, sowing, watering, reaping, threshing, caring for cattle, and begetting children wherewith the valley was to be peopled.

The valley echoed with the ring of Abd el Mumen's axe as he cleared the forest; the bellowings and gruntings of cattle rose up in place of the lion's roar and the hyæna's mad guffaw. The homely cackle of hens drove out the shrieking and singing of wild birds, and truly the Vale of Iherrushen became the dwelling place of a people, destined to witness many strange and wofully human happenings as the children of men multiplied in it.



CHAPTER II

INCREASE

As the legend is related to-day in the Vale of Iherrushen, Abd el Mumen's wife bore him first a son called Mohend, and then a daughter, Tadmut. As the years went on, Abd el Mumen cleared patch after patch of the rocky soil that lined the bottom of the valley. These places he banked up and levelled, strengthening the sides of the terraces with boulders of granite, lest the stream in its flood time carry off the soil and the young corn and barley growing in it. When he had prospered in his work, he took unto himself three other wives, one from a distant valley, and two from the Beni Urriaghel to the north.

About the time when his children were growing old enough to help him in his ploughing and reaping, there entered the valley another man, Mohend u Ali. Abd el Mumen did not dispute with him, but permitted him to build a house near his own, a short distance up the valley, and to use the mosque which he himself had found. Seeing that Mohend u Ali was a man of hard work and of piety, Abd el Mumen gave to him his daughter Tadmut, and from these two are descended all of the Beni Tadmut of to-day, who take their name from the female line, since it was Tadmut who was older in the valley than her husband. Later there came another man, Fars,

whom Abd el Mumen allowed to stay, and to whom he gave another of his daughters.

Abd el Mumen begat seven sons, the oldest of whom was Mohend, and the descendants of these sons and the descendants of Fars are reckoned as the true ones of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. It was only after the death of their parents that the children of Abd el Mumen's eldest daughter and her husband set themselves off separately as the Beni Tadmut.

This valley was a capacious one, and in its pristine forest coat seemed large enough for more than three men and their descendants. A certain Aissa wandered from Abd el Mumen's ancestral herding grounds into the valley of Ikaroen, named after its first settler, Karo the Big-headed. Hence Aissa followed the water which drains Ikaroen westward and northward, and, having climbed various passes, descended into the Vale of Iherrushen. Abd el Mumen did not discover Aissa's presence for many months after his arrival, so busy were both men in the establishment of their domains. The place where Aissa settled was called Tarosht, and in Tarosht to-day dwell his descendants.

Still others came, a certain Christian named Yahya from the north and west, who founded Telmest at the head of the valley, and erected a strange cross there; and Ali u Hend, a true believer, who found that most of the good land in the valley was already taken, wherefore he climbed the mountain on the nether side and settled on the stony hill of Teliwin; and last of all, Moh Mumiud, the Red-headed, who took that small patch of valley, just below Tarosht, which is to-day called Izgwawen, or "the Red-Heads."

While all these people had been coming into the Vale of Iherrushen, chopping the pine high up the mountain slopes and driving away the wild beasts which had lurked in their shade, certain changes happened at Tiddest, where the water of Iherrushen and of Bayu joins that of Tighza to rush northward toward Nekor. Sidi Misaud's prayers and privations had been answered. A younger saint, Sidi Abdullah el Kholani, coming from the westward, had joined him, and together they made a fresh assault upon the scandalous heathendom of Tiddest. The people of Tiddest, who bear the name Ikhuanen, meaning thieves, had perhaps become softened by the reflected godliness of Abd el Mumen and his progeny. At any rate they accepted the entreaties of Sidi Abdullah el Kholani, with his thin young beard and earnest demeanour, and finally built themselves a mosque directly over the river, in which he who had converted them instructed them in prayer. The ancient roughness of their speech smoothed itself out with this new influence and through talking with the pious folk of Iherrushen, and old curious words, incomprehensible in purer Shillhah, were at length forgotten, and passed into the limbo of languages forever lost. At length Sidi Abdullah el Kholani was buried in the mosque he had builded, and the older saint's remains, carried into the Vale of Iherrushen, became the nucleus of a shrine.

In those days there was peace in the valley and on the mountains, and tempestuous prayer, its fervour not yet dulled by habit and boredom, rang five times each day from the white mosques which marked the ancestral settlements. Piety and space, ambition and plenty, kept

bloodshed from the Iherrushen in these Eden-like days of building and of begetting.

Mohend, the eldest son of Abd el Mumen, had seen few men other than his father, and under the pious influence of this patriarch and of Sidi Misaud became suffused with the fervour of religion. Tall and spare, blue of eye and craggy faced, he looked as if he had grown, like a hardy young cedar, from the rocky side of the new valley. This he travelled frequently from head to outlet, but seldom left. His brothers, born when their father was older, had felt less of the benign influence, and needed Sidi Misaud's visits and the urgings of their elder brother to keep them at prayer.

It was Mohend who acted as preceptor in the mosque divinely builded, and it was he who stood on the edge of its porch, his hands cupped over his widely opened mouth, calling his kinsmen to prayer.

There is a small brown stain on the western wall of the mosque, which generations of men have whitewashed around but never over. The Ulad Abd el Mumen tell their children that this is the blood of a cockroach which Mohend slew by reaching up and crushing it with the tip of his middle finger. Generations of gangling boys have stretched their fingers toward this stain, but none has touched it without jumping. Many old men have pointed to it with white, bony fingers, to add weight to their contention that the present holds but little of the past's interest and virtue.

Amar the son of Mohend the son of Abd el Mumen was in turn the chief one of the growing clan, which was increasing mightily indeed, for Mohend had had many

brothers and they as well as he had begotten many sons. The Beni Tadmut were also growing numerous.

Amar's leadership lay less in his piety than in his skill at rearing plants and trees. It was he who brought into the valley the first kerchief-ful of maize, and planted it in well manured hillocks on the lowest and best watered terrace; it was he who cast the grains of this plant upon a hot iron pan, where they burst open, white and flaky, as they became roasted.

From Beni Amart one day he also brought a dozen spongy potatoes, with green sprouts, which he was careful not to break, issuing from the eyes. The boys came down from the mosque to watch over his shoulders as he cut each tuber carefully into several pieces before planting them. When the potatoes had been dug and the maize dried and hulled from the cobs, it was the younger men who begged samples to taste and seedlings, while Amar's uncles closed their gummy jaws over soft spoonfuls of rye porridge, mumbling that what had nourished their father Abd el Mumen would be sufficient to sustain them also.

Moh, the eldest son of Amar the grandson of Abd el Mumen, came through inheritance into a considerable property. Through his industry Amar had acquired land and trees. The products of these Moh was content to share with those who wished to care for them. The valley was filling up and there was scarcely land enough for all. Disputes arose at times over boundaries, over the ownership of fruit on overhanging trees, and over the trampling of crops and the breaking of twigs on fruit trees. Moh headed the council which decided these questions, and fed the councillors well.

Moh owned a rifle, the first in the Vale of Iherrushen, and with this he shot wild boar on the mountains, pretending that he did this only because the animals were uprooting gardens; but goatherds driving their charges upward in search of grass came at times upon tusked carcasses from which chunks of flesh had been cut, too cleanly to be the work of jackals or of birds. Concerning these things they kept silence, or at most only whispered.

It was Moh who built the great house upon Afussa, the mountain spur on the north, downstream from the village of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. This house overlooks the juncture of the Bayu and the Tighza, where they form the Nekor, from a distance; it also commands the lower reaches of the Bayu, and thus the gateway to the Vale of Iherrushen. The manner of Moh's building was a curious one, and the tradition concerning it seems scarcely credible, as it is told to-day by the old men loitering about the mosques in the Vale of Iherrushen.

Moh was not only a diligent hunter, but a joiner of great skill as well. The ploughs which he adzed were finely shaped and much sought after, and he bridged narrow gullies with hollow tree trunks so that the irrigation water could run across them, instead of losing itself by evaporation along lengthy ditches which contoured either side. A clever worker in wood, he made many new things.

Hence it was not with disbelief that a novel proposal of his was received by the councillors of Iherrushen, meeting under the trees.

Moh said to them: "I have dreamed a strange thing in the night. I saw a great machine made of fir logs, which

would hold fifty men in its belly, and which moved about on legs. This machine ran very swiftly up the valley and in a moment was out of sight. Then two jinns appeared before me in the form of men, tall and capped with high turbans. One of the jinns said to me, 'Moh, would you like to build a machine such as this?'

" 'It would give me great delight,' said I, 'for many of the men of Iherrushen have never been out of this valley. I would like to go with them and visit Fez. But I did not see it well, because it was moving so swiftly. You will have to call it back so that I can look at it clearly, to see how it is made.'

"At this the jinns shouted in loud voices, and soon the machine reappeared at the top of the valley, and ran down in our direction, at a great speed. When it drew up in front of us the legs ceased moving, and the machine stopped. The men threw a ladder over the side and climbed out, greatly pleased. I examined it carefully to see how it was made. Some of it, however, was too complicated for me to imitate. The jinns reassured me, however, by saying that they would help me with those parts. I must have many logs, and no people may come near me until it is finished, otherwise the jinns will not help."

The councillors questioned Moh at length about the machine, but to each demand for knowledge he replied: "If I tell how it is made, the jinns will not help me."

Finally he persuaded the councillors to climb high on the mountain, each with his followers, and fell trees. These trees they trimmed and dragged down the slope a short distance, to a flat place on the mountain side called Afussa. At that time there were other trees

growing in front of Afussa, so that what went on at the level place could not be seen from afar.

"Now," said Moh, "I must be left alone for ten days, since this is too great a task to be done in a few hours. If any of you remain here, or even come within sight of this place, the jinns who have promised to help me will run away and never come back, because they are shy in the presence of all men saving me. Return after ten days, and we will all ride to Fez together."

In ten days the men returned, and beheld an odd spectacle. No machine was there, but in the middle of the flat space stood a fine wooden house, high of loft, slant-roofed and shingled, with grooved gutters and carved lintels, and tight-fitting doors. Along the front of it ran a porch of adzed planks, and a ladder projecting from the doorway of the loft showed that some one had climbed up there and pulled it in after him. From the beautifully carved window of the upper story protruded the muzzle of Moh's flintlock, still the only one in the valley, and the voice of its owner rang out, as if from the rifle barrel.

"The jinns at best are a fickle folk," he said. "When they came here they started work, but soon ceased, saying that they needed gold for some of the more intricate parts of the machine. I could get them none, and knew that you could not get them any either. Therefore the jinns became dissatisfied and departed, and having all this wood at hand, and nothing else to make with it, I built this house. Those of you who are satisfied with what I have done may enter the lower floor, and you will find there a wooden tub heaped with kuskus, for your enjoy-

would hold fifty men in its belly, and which moved about on legs. This machine ran very swiftly up the valley and in a moment was out of sight. Then two jinns appeared before me in the form of men, tall and capped with high turbans. One of the jinns said to me, 'Moh, would you like to build a machine such as this?'

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ment; and those of you who are displeased had better go home before you feel a bullet between your ribs."

The men, at first dumbfounded and then angry, realised, when they heard this speech, that the fault lay with them. One of them commenced laughing, and then another, until soon they all burst into thunderclaps of mirth so great that numbers of them fell upon the ground holding their paunches, and when they had sufficiently recovered they went inside, all of them, and attacked the tub of kuskus. Moh lowered the ladder, climbed down with them, and made them sweet pancakes which he served them with honey and butter. Until he died Moh kept the great room of this house open to all comers, who lay about in it and were fed, for Moh considered that all who had shared in hewing the logs were entitled to use it.

After Moh had at length married, he hunted less upon the mountain, and spent more of his time at farming, in order that he might cause the property which he had inherited to increase, for the sake of the son whom he was striving to beget.

His wife failed, however, to conceive. After three years he would have divorced her but for the softness of her bosoms and the keenness of her judgment, which latter helped him greatly in council, and kept him from doing wild and unprofitable things. He could not do without this wife, so he married three others in succession, and after the last of these had proved fruitless he sought out the aid of magicians. Journeying to mosques in other tribes, in Beni Urriaghel and Temsaman, he paid out many measures of barley and even some silver for charms which proved of no use to him.

Finally, however, when his scalplock had begun to grey, he was successful. His first wife bore him a son, a great bony baby with a high-domed head. Despite the ministrations of other women, the mother died shortly after and the young Hamidu, later to be given the title of Malim, or master, was put at the breast of an aunt.

When the Malim Hamidu was beginning to lose his milk teeth, his father was tusked by a wild boar, felled, and trampled by the herd. His companions carried him home, limp and bleeding from many wounds. Thus was the Malim Hamidu left in the care of three stepmothers, who were very unkind to him and made his life miserable. Hence the Malim Hamidu ran away in the night and wandered westward until he came to Taghzuth. In this tribe he apprenticed himself to a gunsmith, and having learned this trade and having purchased tools of Christian make, he returned home to the Vale of Iherrushen. He set himself up a small shop by the river's edge, and in this he did his work. He also built three water-run flour mills in the Vale of Iherrushen.

In those days the valley was becoming crowded and people grew short tempered. Quarrels being frequent, guns were in great demand. Also there was much fighting with the people from Beni Urriaghel and from Beni Amart, to the north and west of them. In the winter time when famine crept into the valley, when the grain pits were empty and the raisin baskets low, the tracks of wild boar were seen in the snow around the sunken granaries, and he who possessed a rifle could provide himself with pork, which although old Abd el Mumen had shuddered at the thought of it, men once more were eat-

ing. There had been no new saints since Sidi Abdullah el Kholani, and old ways were bound to reappear.

For one purpose or another, then, rifles were much to be desired. Hence the Malim Hamidu soon found himself the most popular man in the valley, what with orders for new weapons and repairs upon old. He knew that there was little money in the valley, naught but a few small pieces of silver, and that land was the best thing to own. Hence he exchanged rifles for terraces, and as the years went by reclaimed most of the land which had been his rightful heritage, as well as that of many others. With the land he gathered a number of share workers who received together a fifth of the total produce of the Malim Hamidu's domain. He bought a whole mountain from the Urriaghlis of Tafsest and covered it with grape vines. For this mountain he gave two flintlocks. Down in the bank of the Bayu he found nodules of flint which he knapped into squares and sold dearly.

As the possessions of the Malim Hamidu grew, so did the esteem in which men held him increase, so that he was much sought after. The councillors came regularly to his house to talk, the while drinking their host's tea, which was given them without stint.

The sons of the Malim Hamidu were Ali the Yellowhaired, Amar the Scabhead, Mimun, and Hamid, of whom Ali the Yellowhaired was by many years the oldest. When Ali was still beardless and his brothers small children, the Malim Hamidu took his four sons and their mothers to Tangier, where they embarked on a great ship of the Christians and sailed to Iskandria in Egypt, along with other pilgrims. From here they rode on donkeys to

the great city of Masr, which the Christians call Cairo, and thence to a sea which is called Red, down this in a small felucca manned by Muslimin to a roadstead port whence they walked on foot to Mekka and Medina, and went through the formulæ of pilgrimage.

They did not stay long, because the Imam had wisely forbidden Riffians to tarry, knowing them to be hard folk to cheat and quick on hilt and trigger. Back in Tangier, Ali the Yellowhaired, a lad of fifteen, had remained in the city while the others returned to the Vale of Iherrushen. That pilgrimage enhanced the greatness of the Malim Hamidu. His voice was the chief one in the council, and to him men came first for advice. It was he who chose the schoolmaster and the preceptor in the mosque.

His three youngest sons had been too small to retain much from their journey. Memories of donkey drivers, of swart men of Hind kneeling and bowing in prayer, of gipsy strumpets dancing in the streets, these were faint recollections.

CHAPTER III

MALIM HAMIDU'S CHILDREN

In the five years after their return from their pilgrimage, the Malim Hamidu's sons passed from childhood into the gangling, heavy-boned state which precedes the condition of men. One autumn evening in the Vale of Iherrushen, a rich, earthy evening, with the air full of harvest odours and the faint tang of cedar smoke, the Malim Hamidu sat on a flat stone beside his door, watching them play a game of *hiyam*. This is a strenuous contest, one calculated to test the strength of those who play it. It gave the Malim Hamidu a sweet inner pleasure to see his sons so strong and so long winded.

There stood the Scabhead Amar, his sandalled toes curving downward to grip the ground, his two hands clutching the lip of a high, narrow mortar, adzed out of a log of oak. The sweat which glistened on his round forehead was curiously absent from his parchment-like scalp, covered with scar tissue from a childhood infection. Around him ran his three brothers, Ali the Yellowhaired, Hamid, and Mimun, trying to touch the mortar without being in turn touched, shouting rapidly the call of the game, "Khoms! Khoms! Khoms!" The Scabhead Amar leaped and twisted, striking out with his feet, while his brothers coursed in and out, reaching for the mortar and dodging his sandals.

Ali, who was full grown, blond of head and of mous-

tache, and elegant of countenance, foppishly attired in a white Arab tunic and gaily embroidered belt, lunged in while Amar the Scabhead was kicking at Hamid, and touched the lip of the vessel.

The cry changed. "Harrs! Harrs! Harrs!" they shouted, and smote the Scabhead Amar mightily on the back with their fists and the sides of their stocky hands. Amar kicked out with redoubled vigour, and landed a hard blow in Hamid's midriff. Now it was Hamid's turn to hold the mortar, and the Scabhead drew back, shouting "Khoms!" with the others, and darting in and out toward the deeply patinated mouth of the mortar.

Thus the game went on until the rich red sunset glowing over Telmest had faded to a dull saffron and it had become too dark to see clearly.

"Enough!" cried the Malim Hamidu, rising from his stone, "you have played enough. Wash off your sweat and we will eat."

The four brothers, panting now and somewhat glassy-eyed, filed down the path to the water of Iherrushen, in which they plunged naked, and arose rubbing their bodies vigorously. Resuming their garments, they returned to their father's house, out of which issued the sweet smell of cooking. In the house the mother of Ali the Yellowhaired spread a mat on the floor and on it laid a bowl of mashed peas, simmered and seasoned. Amar the Scabhead's mother, short and chunky like her son, laid three round loaves of rye bread about it, while the mother of Hamid and Mimun, issuing from a connecting room, brought a two-handled jug of curds.

The five bent their heads for a moment, and after saying: "In the Name of God," broke the bread, distributed

it, and all commenced eating; scooping up the thick purée with the crusts, and passing the curds from mouth to mouth. When they had finished the food was removed to a corner, and the women ate what was left.

Hamid, picking up a clay brazier, walked to the fire which glowed near the women, and seizing a red coal between thumb and forefinger, bounced it upon the horny palm of his hand, at length dropping it in the receptacle, and over it laid chunks of charcoal. Taking this outdoors he blew upon it until all had been ignited, and when the whole was glowing redly and had stopped smoking, he brought it in and set it before his father.

Reaching up on a high shelf, the old man took down a gaily coloured tin of tea, a silver pot, and a jar of honey. Hamid's mother went out to the back of the house to pull a few wisps of mint. Glass cups came from the high shelf, and the old man brewed his tea. This was a great extravagance, and a tremendous luxury. Malim Hamidu in all the Vale of Iherrushen alone had tea. He was serving it to-night in honour of Ali the Yellow-haired, who had this very afternoon arrived from Fez.

The guest of honour arose, and groping about in a panier which stood in a corner of the room, produced from its mysterious concavity a finely chased pistol, and three silver-sheathed daggers, curved and curiously etched. The pistol he gave to his father, and to his brothers each a knife. Tears stood in the corners of the old man's eyes as, arising swiftly, he kissed his son on the forehead; while the three boys drew their blades carefully and fingered them with delight.

Again retiring to the panier, Ali the Yellowhaired drew from it a shiny little mandolin with three strings,

and seating himself near the brazier strummed it, the while singing a gay Arab love song. Of the boys, only the Scabhead Amar, who was oldest, could understand the words clearly, and the music was still unfamiliar to all of them. Surely their brother was a great man to manifest such accomplishments.

After several songs Ali the Yellowhaired laid aside his instrument and commenced entertaining them with the narration of his exploits in the country of the Arabs, while the women listened in their corner, and at times broke in with questions and with exclamations of wonder.

"I will tell you how I got my hundredweight of silver," said Ali. "I took it from the Christians, and it was very easy. I made me a hook of iron, a strong one, with an eye at one end. To the eye I tied a strong, light rope, not one of grass, but such as the Christians sell. I wrapped the rope around my waist under my jellaba, and thrust the hook in it like a buckle.

"Down in the middle of the city is the bank of the English. I rode my mule near to it, but not too close, and left it in a covered street which has but one end. There were no people walking about, because it was the middle of the night. I took off my slippers and put them in the saddlebags. Hanging over the front of the bank is a balcony, railed with an iron grill such as the Jews make. I threw the hook over this, pulled it until it was fast, and climbed the rope. The door of the balcony gave without much noise. I crept quietly down the stairs. There was a big Christian sitting at a table writing in a large book. He had glasses on his nose, and his head was as bald as Amar's, but with no scabs on it. I

crept up behind the Christian and thrust the barrel of my pistol into his back, on the left side, between two ribs.

" 'Stand up!' I said in Arabic, 'and fold your hands behind your head!'

"He did not move. I said the same thing in Spanish, and then he did as I had told him. Underneath the book I found a pistol, a Christian one, with six chambers, and six bullets in them. I told him to open the iron box in the corner of the room. He said he did not know how. I took one hand and twisted it. I said I would break it if he did not do as I told him. He took three small keys out of a drawer and opened it. Inside were three bags of Spanish dollars, four bags of Hassani silver, and much paper. I tied him to his chair with the rope from the hook, and lashed my turban tightly in his mouth.

"Then I took off my cloak and tied the silver in it, all but one bag of Hassani. I walked out through the front door, because it was locked on the inside. I put the silver in my saddlebags and rode to the house of the judge. He came out in his nightshirt, rubbing his eyes. I gave him the bag of Hassani.

" 'Where did you get it, Ali?' he asked.

" 'Never mind,' said I, 'but let no one follow me until the day after to-morrow.'

"I waited until the shops opened and bought these three knives from a Soussi. The pistol which I gave you, my father, is the one I thrust into the Christian's back. I am carrying the one I found under the book. That is enough."

Ali the Yellowhaired reached into his leather scrip, which he had not worn during the game of *hiyam*, and

pulled out an English pistol of antique model, which to Ali's kinsmen seemed an object of great splendour.

After the women had lain down on mats on the raised masonry shelf at the far end of the room, the four brothers and their father took the silver from the paniers and carried it into another room. Here they dug a deep hole, as quietly as possible, in one corner, and buried the money. The dirt that was left over Hamid carried out in a basket and scattered behind the house. When they had smoothed and trampled the floor over the place of concealment, they brushed straw over it, and scattered a few flakes of chipped whitewash from the walls.

The five of them lay down in this room to sleep. When the others seemed to be slumbering, Amar the Scabhead crept over to the side of Ali, and shook his shoulder gently.

"Don't shake me," whispered Ali, "I am awake. What is the trouble?"

"It is about my sister Muna. Did you notice anything?"

"She seemed very quiet, and rather pale. What is wrong? Is she pregnant?"

"Yes, she is getting big, but so far has managed to hide it from the neighbours with that great belt mother bought her at Ikaroen. She has been ill very often lately. I think the women have been giving her potions, but they have not worked. I think father suspects. He has been very much upset of late over little things. He behaved well because you were here."

"Who did it?" asked Ali the Yellowhaired.

"Abd el Kadher the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut."

"Where is he? Why haven't you made him marry her?"

"He ran away to the country of the Arabs."

"I will kill him when I go back. But we must do something now. We cannot have this known about our family. Have you a rope?"

"Yes. Come on. Be quiet. Don't let the others hear."

Ali and Amar crept into the next room, to where Muna slept, lying on one side, with her cheek in her hand. The two brothers drew the mat on which she lay, slowly and gently, away from the other women. At length Muna stirred, and turned over on her back. Dried tears caked her cheeks and the corners of her eyes. Ali the Yellowhaired lifted her head quickly, and before she could cry out had opened her jaws and gagged her firmly with his turban. Amar crushed her arms to her sides in a strong grip, and held her legs in a scissors-hold with his own before she could commence kicking. While he thus held her, Amar trussed her up.

Cautiously they lifted her and carried her out the door, shutting it quietly behind them. If any of the women were awake they gave no evidence of it. Once outside, Amar the Scabhead slung Muna over his broad shoulders, and the two tramped upward, between terraces, through the region of grapevines, across the stubble of new-cut rye, and into the steep zone of juniper. Climbing even higher, they passed between the dark boles of pine trees, where the pale light of the moon did not penetrate. Beyond the pine they arrived panting and sweating at the crest of rock. Just over this they paused. In the dim light the peaks of Beni Urriaghel

thrust themselves up out of murky valleys. In the far distance a faint gleam might be the sea.

Amar set his burden down gently. The two rested a moment, and then commenced rolling and lifting the rocks apart to form a shallow grave. In this Amar the Scabhead set his sister, and turned away while Ali the Yellowhaired pierced her to the heart with a knife. Ali rolled the stones back over her. Amar was sitting a distance apart, with his back turned, sobbing convulsively. When Ali had finished, he went to Amar and put his arm about his half-brother's shoulder. The two descended, and were lying with the others when the Malim Hamidu arose slightly after dawn.

The sharp smoke of juniper welled out in gusts from the main room. It bellied downward to the floor and made the four brothers gasp. Malim Hamidu went into the room where the women were preparing breakfast. He found them going about their duties slowly, sobbing.

"Where is Muna?" asked the old man.

"We do not know," answered the girl's mother.

The Malim Hamidu re-entered the room in which his sons were making themselves ready. Ali the Yellowhaired was unfolding a new turban which he had just taken out of his scrip.

Amar the Scabhead answered, with his eyes intent on the floor: "She has gone away."

"Oh," said the old man. And he put on clean garments, and took his walking stick and his favourite rifle from the wall. "I am going to the mosque to pray."

CHAPTER IV

THE SULTAN'S RIFLES

Ali the Yellowhaired went back to Fez. A less courageous man might have feared to do this, but such was Ali's confidence in his friend the judge that he entered the city openly. In it he had recently bought a fine house, which he had equipped in the most sumptuous manner. Unlike his brothers, who were content with the rough homespun of their native hills, and who wore their hair in pigtails, Ali the Yellowhaired was careful of his appearance to the point of foppishness. The only difference which appeared between his dress and that of the richest Arab merchants was a vertical slit cut through each of his outer garments, over the right breast. This was because he was left handed, and because he kept the English pistol, which had now been decorated with fine inlay, in a pocket of his shirt. He had no trouble obtaining sufficient cartridges for it.

Besides equipping his house with fine hangings and cushions, Ali further provided for his pleasure in it by making it the abode of three accomplished female musicians, as skilled in the amorous arts as in music. This, he knew, would not have met the approval of his pious parent the Malim Hamidu, who, although he considered the Arabs fair prey for any Riffian, would not condone immoral actions. However, the Ulad Abd el Mumen

seldom left their valley, and Arab women were not like his own kind; they did not count.

Perhaps Ali the Yellowhaired intended to amass a fortune, and when he was old, to retire to the Rif to live for the rest of his days fighting his family's feuds and living in utter propriety. But men like Ali seldom think far ahead of the blissful present.

Ali the Yellowhaired had a number of wealthy and pleasure-loving friends who often came to his house to dine and be amused, both by the musicians and by stray entertainers whom Ali's servants brought from the market place.

After several months of riotous living, squandering the profits of previous adventures, Ali found but few dollars lining the bottom of his box. So he set about thinking of some great burglary. It must not be a mean one, it must be a crime befitting his position. At length he decided to rob the Sultan's palace. This crime required careful preparation, and as always he took no one into his confidence.

Discreet inquiries from palace familiars convinced him that the Sultan took good care of his possessions. After days of planning, Ali decided that the most vulnerable part was the arsenal of the palace guards, wherein reposed at normal times some fifty or more fine rifles, of Christian make, and embellished by the most accomplished of Soussi artisans.

No one knows exactly how Ali stole them. It is said that he used his hook again, and his nimbleness in climbing about on parapets and ledges stood him in great service. By morning he had the fifty rifles carefully stored

in the inner room of his house, to which only his closest friends ever penetrated.

After a few hours' sleep he went to the outer part of the house to breakfast with his three courtesans. He felt somewhat nervous, which was unusual with him, and needed feminine consolation.

"O Ali," said one of them in her sweetest manner, "do you know what day this is? It is the feast of Sidi Burnusi, and every one is going out to his tomb to celebrate. Why can't we go too?"

Although piety was the least of Ali's accomplishments, he thought that such a celebration would soothe him. So within an hour the procession started, Ali on his fine white horse, the women on three gaily saddled mules, their heavily kohled eyes shining over their veils, and a half dozen servants walking behind, carrying equipment and provisions.

As they drew near the northern gate a crier ran past them. "The Sultan's rifles have been stolen! Who stole the Sultan's rifles?"

This he shouted again and again, and the people paused to discuss the news. Ali knew that many tribesmen from the Middle Atlas, who paid no more fealty to the Sultan than did the Riffians, were followers of Sidi Burnusi. Perhaps he could dispose of his loot that day. The sooner the better.

As they passed the judge's house, close to the gate, Ali spied this dignitary being helped by two hostlers onto a plump single-footing mule.

"Are you coming to visit Sidi Burnusi?" asked Ali the Yellowhaired.

The judge assented, and joined his followers to the procession.

"Come on ahead a bit," said the judge. "I would like to talk with you."

When they had ridden past the gate and out of earshot of the others, the judge said: "Ali, you should not have done it."

"Done what?" asked Ali.

"There is no time for hedging. I repeat, you should not have done it. This is too big a thing. I cannot protect you this time."

"And if I am taken, what shall I tell them about their judge?"

The judge shrank within his fat. "You must not go to the feast of Sidi Burnusi," he said. "There is the road north. If you start now you can get away to the Rif, and no one will take you. I will send half the rifles after you as far as the Branes country."

"Half the rifles!" exclaimed Ali. "If you cannot protect me, why should I give you half the rifles?"

"Very well," said the judge with great dignity, "I am through with this affair. I know nothing about it."

The two dropped back to their convoys. When they approached the tomb, they separated, the followers of each setting up a tent on the grass about the building, where a hundred other tents were being erected.

Ali the Yellowhaired spent the day drinking tea and eating sweet things, in the dulcet company of his playmates. This was what most of the others were likewise doing, enjoying immensely their attention to religion.

In the afternoon Ali walked about while his soft musicians slumbered. Reaching finally the section of the

festival covered by the black goat-hair tents of the Atlas tribesmen, he entered first one booth and then another, drinking tea and engaging in loose conversation with the Braber women, whose husbands were following their usual custom of visiting other tents for the same purpose.

In an hour Ali had reached an agreement with a leader of the Ait Yusi. The latter was to appear at Ali's house two hours before dawn, with a dozen men and several wiry horses, and in exchange was to leave a fine sum of money. He had come to Fez to buy rifles, and to obtain the Sultan's was better than he had expected.

Ali went back to his tent. It was afternoon now, and on the braziers outside the tents he noticed small lumps of a sweet-smelling substance smoking.

"What is that?" he asked one of his women.

"That is frankincense, and ours is the only tent without any. I think you should buy us some."

So Ali sent a boy to find a dealer in frankincense, and bought a dozen handfuls, with great ostentation. Many eyes peeked from under the flaps of the tents about him, and many rich Arabs knitted their brows and cracked their knuckles in chagrin.

"Let us burn it all at once," cried Ali the Yellow-haired, and piled it on the coals in his brazier. Such extravagance had never before been witnessed.

Shortly after this happened, the sky darkened suddenly, a great wind arose, and rain came down in torrents. Against this deluge the flimsy pleasure tents were useless. Water poured in the seams, flooded the floors, and the wind flattened dozens.

Ali rushed out, snatched the smoky brazier from the

ground, and called to his courtesans to follow him. He ran between the tents to the sanctuary, bundled his women in and a half dozen worshippers out, and fastened the door with a bar.

"It will soon be warm enough in here," said Ali, "and the saint will protect us."

Faces appeared at the narrow window of the tomb. Ali sat on the saint's headstone, with the women around him. Blows fell on the door.

"Let us in! Let us in!" cried voices.

"You often pray to your saint to protect you," answered Ali. "Ask him now to send away the rain. He is such a powerful saint, surely he will take care of his followers."

Cries of wrath answered this sacrilegious challenge. A bearded face, thrust in the window, cried: "Out of there, you Riffian, you Christian, you heathen! Stop desecrating the tomb, throw out those loose women! This is a scandal for which you will pay."

At length the storm abated. Ali left the tomb and regained his horse and mules. Many were the evil looks cast at him by the bedraggled worshippers who remained. Most, however, had fled back into the city.

The leader of the Ait Yusi entered Ali's house at three in the morning and left shortly after. Ali now possessed a good sum of money, enough to keep him in riotous living for another month or more. But in the soberness of the last hours before morning discretion conquered him. It would be better to go back to the Rif. He descended the stairs quietly, and saddled his horse. Two of the mules he loaded with money.

As he was turning the corner of his own street, he saw

soldiers riding toward him in great haste, waving their muskets, and their blue coats flapping.

"Halt!" they cried. "Halt! Ali the Riffian!"

Wheeling, Ali drew his pistol and fired two shots. The foremost pursuer tumbled out of his saddle and blocked the others. Dropping, with great regret, the bridle of the first mule, Ali galloped toward the northern gate. As he approached this a dozen men leaped toward him. He fired another volley, which was answered. A bullet pierced his right arm above the elbow.

Leaping from his horse he battered the judge's door with his left shoulder. It gave, and Ali was soon inside. Clipping the chin of the negro door-keeper, who was not quite awake, with the butt of his pistol, Ali leaped past him and up three flights of stairs to the roof.

"You fool," cried the judge from some recess as Ali was speeding past him. "They captured the Ait Yusi men just after they had passed the gate."

From the roof Ali jumped to that of the two-storied house next it, wriggling from his outer garments as he did so. Across this he dashed, up another roof, over a five-foot space to the city wall, and from this he jumped to the ground. He was hit in the leg by a bullet just before he landed. He was tied and carried to the palace, in the midst of a great crowd. As the soldiers carried him through the door, he reared his head high and spit through his golden beard. And no more was seen or heard of Ali the Yellowhaired, the Riffian.

CHAPTER V

FLESH OF THE WILD OX

In the mosque of the Ulad Abd el Mumen one night, shortly after Ali the Yellowhaired had left, the boys of the village were convening, and in lack of any real business were playing a game. Amar the Scabhead, the son of the Malim Hamidu, was judge, sitting on the raised part of the floor, wearing a large white turban which was really one of his shirts, and looking very dignified.

His brother Hamid, a few years younger than Amar, was the plaintiff. He was a small, stocky boy, round faced and mischievous of eye. He was accusing another boy, nicknamed the Vulture, of stealing olives from his trees. The latter, the defendant, was struggling in the grip of two other boys who acted as guards.

"How do you know the Vulture stole them?" asked Amar. "How do you know that it wasn't I, for example?"

"In the first place," replied Hamid, "I could tell the Vulture in the dark by his hooked nose."

"Have no others hooked noses?"

"I could see the lice in his pigtail hanging on by their teeth as he ran, when I was chasing him."

"This is too much!" cried the defendant. "First he accuses me of theft, and then of untidiness. O your honour, I did not steal the olives, I was burglarising the

schoolmaster's house. If you do not believe in my innocence, you may ask the schoolmaster."

"Schoolmaster," cried Amar, "can you support this evidence?"

"Well," replied another boy, stroking an imaginary beard, "I cannot really say whether I can or not. My house was surely burglarised, but unfortunately I was up at Tarosht sleeping with the blacksmith's wife. Perhaps if you ask the man who was calling on my wife, he may tell you."

"Who then," questioned Amar, "was taking your place?"

"To decide that question," replied the so-called schoolmaster, "you must find out whose sandals I found behind my raisin basket this morning."

"They were mine!" cried the Vulture. "I took them off when I entered the house to rob it, so as to make less noise. I left so hastily that I forgot them."

"We must have the sandals," said the judge. "If three witnesses can swear that they are the Vulture's, he is freed of all guilt. If they are not his, and we find the owner, that man must pay two hundred dollars' fine for adultery, and we will burn his house. Schoolmaster, go fetch them."

The schoolmaster arose with great dignity, and was about to go outside, when from the level ground in front of the mosque came the sound of hooves and the scraping of sandals.

The door opened, and four persons entered. The boys recognised them at once as wandering students from the Jebala. Two of them were young men with thin black beards, puffy lips, and the watery eyes which come from

too much smoking of hashish. They were clad in gaily embroidered jellabas, and their pigtails, braided with silk, hung to their waists. The other two were dressed in tailored shirts, girded at the waist, and were small and beardless. The effeminacy of their olive features was enhanced by lustrous kohl painted around their eyelids, and by henna stains on their fingers.

"May a great blessing be upon you," said one of the latter in a piping voice, in the clipped western Arabic of the Jebala. "We are the guests of God. We are harmless and seek shelter. It is cold outside, and we have not eaten for two days."

So saying the young creature dropped his delicate body on a mat, and drawing a clay bowl and wooden stem from his scrip, fitted them together and crammed the pipe with hashish from a fur-covered pouch.

"Is there no fire," he asked, "to light my pipe with?"

"We will soon bring some," replied Amar the Scabhead, "and food in plenty. Make yourselves comfortable."

The Riffian boys had withdrawn to the far corner of the room and were eyeing their guests with mingled amusement and disgust.

"You are doing well with your Arabic to-night," said the Vulture to Amar the Scabhead. "What do these butterflies want?"

"Just the usual things, a place to sleep and some food. Go out and buy some eggs from the widow Ayesha, and five chickens, if there is enough money in the box. And you, Hamid," he said, looking at his brother, "get some fire. And see if father will give us some of his tea. We must entertain these strangers well."

"Tea for these?" exclaimed Hamid. "Why waste a good drink on such animals? Chickens, too; I wouldn't give them jackal meat."

"Be quiet," said Amar, "some of them may understand Shillhah. Anyway, they are our guests, and we cannot refuse them. Let somebody bring raisins, and almonds."

When three of the boys had gone out to fetch provisions, the fifth Jebally student entered. He was older than the rest, with a few grey hairs in his beard, and further gone in hashish.

"I tied the mule up outside," he mumbled. "Are you sure it will be safe?"

"Safe?" answered Amar. "Nothing can touch it. It is protected by the spirit of our saint."

"What saint was he?" asked the student of hagiography.

"Sidi Mohend the Cross-eyed," answered Amar, rendering the surname in Shillhah, at which the Riffians still left in the room smirked.

"When did he live?" asked the student; "and how did he die?"

"He lived so long ago," answered Amar the Scabhead, "that this mosque has fallen down and been rebuilt three times. He ate the nailparings of Mulay Idris himself, and choked on them and died. On this account he acquired great virtue. He is especially good at curing warts, and in causing pregnancy."

"Hm," said the student credulously, "I must write this down. I have never heard of this saint before."

"I am surprised," said Amar, looking very hurt. "He

is patronised by all of the Gzennaya and Beni Urriaghel."

"What did you say to him?" asked Hamid, who had returned and was busying himself with cooking. "All that the boys could understand was 'cross-eyed.' "

Amar translated his conversation.

When the chickens had been cooked, they were set before the students in a large flat bowl. The newcomers fell upon them greedily, mumbling the sacrament as they rent wing and leg from torso. They ate with both hands, licking their fingers with loud noises. Five loaves of barley bread they used to wipe up the gravy. In a few moments the bowl was shiny bottomed and contained nothing but a few fleshless bones.

"Hm," said the eldest student, "that was very good. Have you nothing else?"

"Surely," replied Amar, who continued in Shillhah: "Hamid, go home and have mother cook some pancakes. Bring them with butter and honey."

"You are crazy," replied Hamid in veiled disgust. "They have already eaten our whole treasury."

"Go at once," replied Amar, "or you will regret it."

Hamid went, for he feared the punishment of his stronger brother. While the students were resting, waiting for the pancakes, Amar the Scabhead served them tea. They did not stop at the third cup, as is the custom among well-bred people, but demanded a fourth, and a fifth. Then the pancakes came in, carried by the scowling Hamid, and with them a bowl of mixed honey and butter. The students fell on this dish with renewed appetite and when the cakes were gone scooped up the rest of the butter and honey in their fingers.

"That was fine too," said the eldest student, "but we are still hungry. Have you no meat?"

"Surely," replied Amar. "Excuse me while I go out to fetch it."

When Amar left, the Riffians, headed by Hamid, talked very angrily with one another about their greedy guests. As none of them could speak enough Arabic to make themselves understood, they were luckily unable to destroy their guests' feeling of hospitality.

The five latter were blissfully smoking hashish and communing with each other in whispers, and in the dull peacefulness of the drug did not fathom the evil looks cast at them.

When Amar the Scabhead returned, the complaints ceased suddenly. He bore in one hand a bowl of meat, cut in cubes and dripping. In the other he carried a dozen or more beaten wire spits. Squatting down before the fire, he covered the spits with small chunks of meat, and put these over the coals in the brazier to broil. A strange but savoury odour arose.

"What are you giving them?" asked Hamid.

"You will learn in due time," replied Amar. "What you must do now is to behave yourselves and stop talking. I can take care of these people."

Amar handed the spits gingerly to the guests. They picked off the chunks of meat, after blowing on them, and commenced eating.

"Hm," said the eldest student, "these are delicious. But I have never tasted this kind of meat before. What is it?"

"It is the flesh of the wild ox," answered Amar. "My uncle shot one on the mountain this morning. We think

they make better eating than ordinary cattle. They have a richer, a gamier, taste."

"Hm," replied the student, "they are much better. But I never heard that there were wild oxen here. Are there many?"

"Very few, unfortunately," replied Amar. "The lions have eaten most of them. But now that there are hardly any lions left, what few wild oxen there are may survive. We hope this for they are fine sturdy animals, and the flesh of the wild ox is the favourite sustenance of our family. They who eat it acquire great courage."

When the students had finished the spitted meat they appeared satisfied.

"Now," said the eldest, "we will entertain you." He spoke a few words softly to the others.

The eldest took up a drum, which he had brought with him, and the two others who possessed beards began blowing on end flutes. Soon the mosque was filled with the dreamy, sensual music of the Jebala. The two younger boys assumed the most languorous of expressions, and rising to their knees commenced swaying and writhing lasciviously. The while they sang their shrill voices rose to delicate cadences.

"What are they singing about?" asked the Vulture in disgust.

"I can't get much of it myself," answered Amar, "but they seem to be making love to each other."

"We cannot allow this business in our mosque," said Hamid vehemently. "It is too filthy. Let's throw them out."

"I told you, Hamid, to let me handle the situation," said Amar sternly. "If we throw them out, others may

yet come back. If I handle things properly, none ever will."

The other boys agreed grudgingly. The scene being enacted before them was new to most of them, and filled them with embarrassment and loathing.

As the music went on its tempo increased, the drum beat more rapidly, like a quick pulse, and the kneeling boys, immersed in an ecstasy of their own making, threw off their upper garments. Their smooth, effeminate bodies glistened with sweat, and the odour of musk permeated the room. After a few moments of this, culminating in a final orgy of sound and rhythm, they dropped to the mat and were quiet, their backs heaving.

One of the flute players put his arm over the shoulders of one of the dancers, and whispered in his ear.

"You had better go outside," said the leader. "I do not trust these Riffians. They are uncivilised. You do not know what they might do to us."

The two walked outside, the arm of the older one still about the shoulders of the other.

"This is too much," said Hamid, standing up. "I will wait no longer. They must get out of the mosque, and get out of the Vale of Iherrushen."

"One more minute," said Amar the Scabhead with a strange twist to his mobile lips. "Wait just one more minute."

The words had hardly left his mouth when a falsetto shriek arose from outside.

"Come out! Come out!" cried two voices. "They have killed our mule! Its rump is all bloody!"

"The flesh of the wild ox," said Amar the Scabhead to the leader of the musicians, as the latter arose quickly,

"has a fine gamy flavour. But the flesh of soft Jebally boys is better."

The three students still in the room ran out in haste, leaving their instruments and their hashish pipes behind them. They did not stop running until they were well up the valley.

CHAPTER VI

THE HEDAWI*

One day, several years later, in early spring, when the ground was soft and spongy and the waters of Bayu and of Iherrushen were running full within their banks, a strange figure, leaning on a twisted cane, shambled up the valley. Rags hung from his shoulders and about his waist, and most of his hairy chest and back was bare. The skin of his body, wrinkled, calloused, and caked with dirt, showed the effects of years of neglect and exposure. A tattered black beard, covering his face, but for his full slobbery lips, to the sunken grey-filmed eyes, hung down in stiff spirals to his chest. The hair of his head, long and woolly, brushed on his shoulders. It was like an evil cloud creeping across the sky on that spring day.

The valley was peaceful. No one had been murdered recently, and there had been no discovered adultery. The farmers halted their cattle and paused, resting on their ploughs, to look down from their terraces upon him. Women ran to their houses to gather in and watch over their children.

The Hedawi continued slowly but deliberately upward, following the path on the northern bank of the

* A Hedawi is a devotee of Sidi Heddi, a saint whose tomb is situated in the Jebala. His followers are addicts to hashish, refuse to wash, and practice sodomy. Many of them go without clothing.

river. Coming to a spring, whence water sparkled over a wooden spout, he drank noisily, and wiped his lips with the back of a flaky forearm. Picking up a cloth bundle which he had set down for a moment, he proceeded. From the bundle issued the smell of food, stale and souring.

Past the Sunday marketplace he walked, disappearing under the gloom of the olive trees, and reappearing in a moment on the other side. He followed the river to where the Bayu joins its waters with those of Iherrushen in a noisy, foamy tumble, and kept on below the houses of the Ulad Abd el Mumen and those of Beni Tadmut. The schoolboys of Ulad Abd el Mumen suddenly ceased their chanting; the sound broke in midair as if cut by a knife, and a dozen small heads with swinging pigtails protruded through the door of the mosque. All eyes were on the Hedawi. A moment later the chanting recommenced, but less loudly, and with less spontaneity.

The Hedawi proceeded upstream until he saw the white mosque of Mukudem glistening on the other side. Pulling his rags up to his chest with one hand, and holding bundle and stick aloft with the other, he forded. The swift water smote his thighs and abdomen, and when he stepped out on the southern bank the rills running off his legs left streaks in the dirt with which they were caked.

He sat down panting on the porch of the cantonal mosque of Iherrushen. The sun was in his eyes, so he shifted, hitching along on his hands, into the shade. Clean and bright things, sun and water, were abhorrent to him. Carefully untying his bundle of refuse, he

drew out of it a heavily patinated pipe bowl as big as his thumb, and a brown stem made in two pieces.

Joining these together, he loaded the pipe with hashish from a tattered pouch, from which he also drew a piece of curved steel, a gun flint, and a small mat of tinder. Holding the tinder and flint together in one hand, he smote them with the piece of steel, several times, until the tinder glowed red when blown upon, with his full, distended lips. He flicked the glow to the pipe with a long thumbnail, and inhaling deeply, lay over on his side and closed his eyes. Thus he smoked, and when his pipe was finished, slept.

About an hour later the Mokaddem Ahadad, the warden of the Mukudem mosque, approached the edifice of which he had charge. His duty it was to keep it in repair, to see that it was swept, that the fires were fuelled, that mats covered the floors, and that food was in it. He also had charge of the land which belonged to the mosque, of the terraces and vineyards and fruit trees. He was a large man, white faced and pasty.

With anxiety and disgust, he discovered the Hedawi huddled up on the porch, loathsome as a great brown caterpillar. Walking over to the intruder, he kicked him in the ribs. The Hedawi rolled over slowly, opened his gum-lidded eyes, and sat up.

"I am the guest of God," he mumbled in Arabic, "and a harmless traveller, cast down by poverty and evil luck. Beware how you kick me, lest the spirit of my saint pay you back many times over. Give me some food."

The Mokaddem Ahadad shuddered.

"The afternoon is still young," he said. "If you start now you will reach the mosque of Temjunt, just over the

watershed, before dusk. They will welcome you there, and feed you on acorns and pork. Pleasant journey!"

The fat warden would have sent the Hedawi onward, had not twenty-five men of Ulad Abd el Mumen arrived for their weekly afternoon prayer, their legs dripping from the river, just as this scene was taking place.

"Wait, Ahadad, what are you doing to this man?" asked the Malim Hamidu, eyeing the stranger critically from beneath matted grey eyebrows.

"I am telling him he would fare better at Temjunt, where they are more his kind."

"You call yourself warden to a mosque of God," cried the Malim Hamidu, "and you send a guest forth without food or rest. It is a fine religion you have come to."

The leader of the Ulad Abd el Mumen turned to the Hedawi, whom he addressed in Arabic: "Get up, fellow, and go wash in the stream. Wash thoroughly, all over. When you are through, come back and let me inspect you. If you are clean enough, you may enter the mosque with us and pray. Then we will feed you and make you comfortable for the night."

The Hedawi hesitated a moment, and then arose slowly, picking up his bundle and stick as he did so.

"Wash!" he mouthed, and stretched his lips into an evil grimace. "Watch me! Such a worthless place as this is I have never seen! You Riffians are dogs, wild animals, and Christians!"

With this he was off, clattering down the bank half bent over. He forded the stream hastily, muttering curses at the water. Once on the other side, he moved quickly along the path westward until he had rounded

a bend of the bank, and those in the mosque could no longer see him.

"Mokaddem Ahadad," said the Malim Hamidu, "when will you learn that inhospitality is forbidden, and also that diplomacy is not?"

Scuffing off his sandals, the gunsmith led his kinsmen in to prayer.

Once around the bend the Hedawi proceeded more slowly. Soon he could see the houses of Izgwawen, perched on the mountainside across the river, and later he came to the mouth of another stream, the Wed Argiwen. There were houses across on the other side, those of Tarosht, spread out on either bank of the river of Iherrushen. Tarosht appeared to be a large village, with large houses. The Hedawi looked further upstream. In the distance he could see the mosque of Telmest, near the head of the valley. There were too many houses. He glanced down at the water in front of him. The Argiwen was too deep. He had had enough water. The Hedawi turned and shuffled back the way he had come. When he passed opposite Mukudem he left the path and crawled through a clump of bushes. Descending past the houses of Beni Tadmut and Ulad Abd el Mumen, he bent almost double and clung to the wall of the bank, lest he be seen from above. The ploughmen had left the terraces, and hence he was not seen.

At length he came to the brook of Tlat, and shuddered at the thought of fording it. Looking upstream, however, he saw a row of stepping stones traversing a shallow place. By means of these he crossed. He paused a moment to ponder. He had come up the Vale of Iherrushen through Tiddest, and he did not like the idea of

going back through there again. He would not go downstream after all. He would go up over the mountain into Beni Urriaghel, and would sleep somewhere on the way.

When he had proceeded up the bank of the Tlat a short way, he spied a sheepfold ahead of him, and on the other side, some distance from the village of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, he could see men at work building a house. It was Amar the Scabhead and his brothers. Amar had just been married, and wished a house of his own to live in. The workers had finished with the walls, and were setting the lintel in place. Amar the Scabhead was sacrificing a hen on the lintel, while the others stopped work to watch. Without this sacrifice all manner of evil spirits would enter the house and render it uninhabitable.

The Hedawi moved on cautiously, until he came to the sheepfold. A rough wall of rounded stones from the stream bed was this, with an open gap for door, and no roof, offering shelter from the wind but not from the sky. The Hedawi squatted down inside of it, and commenced smoking another pipe, watching through a crevice the rite in progress at the new house. Amar the Scabhead had now killed the hen, holding it up so that the blood from its neck spattered on the lintel. Amar then set it down on a stone, and with the help of others plucked it and cleaned it. Then he threw it into a pot of water which had been set on a fire to boil. While they were waiting for it to cook, the housebuilders ate dried apricots out of a flat basket.

All this made the Hedawi hungrier. He opened his bundle wide, and collected what food was in it. Old

crumbs and mouldy crusts of bread, he rolled into a ball and ate in one mouthful. A piece of rancid mutton fat followed. This was all. The Hedawi recommenced smoking.

The Hedawi saw the housebuilders turn and look to the left, toward the centre of the village. He also looked. A dozen men were walking rapidly up a ridge behind the new construction. They seemed to be carrying something. When finally the group lengthened out, he saw that four of them were carrying a mosque door, and on it lay a small bundle wrapped in a white cloth. This was a funeral procession; they must be burying a small child. The men kept changing places at the corner of the door, so that each would have a turn at carrying it. They were hurrying, for it was late afternoon, and they must bury it and be home before sunset. If they should arrive too late, they would be obliged to carry it back and bury it the next day.

The Hedawi watched them hastening along the ridge, silhouetted against the descending sun. At length he lost sight of them as they went upward. As dusk was coming on he saw them coming down again, in greater haste, clattering the empty door against rocks and bushes.

The Hedawi changed his mind. He would cross the Tlat once more. When the last of the mourners were out of sight, when Amar the Scabhead and his friends had left the new house, it had become quite dark. The Hedawi left the sheepfold, gathered up his skirts, and waded.

The next morning at dawn the housebuilders were back again. They had hewn a log of fir on Mount Bayu, had adzed it into a long, tapering octagon, and

this morning had carried it from the village to the new house. A dozen men got beneath it and raised the small end, so that it fitted into the niche left for it in the masonry. Three of them climbed the wall on the other end of the house, and hauled the butt end into place with a rope, while those below pushed it from either side with poles. Now that the ridgepole was in place, it was time for ceremony.

A notched log was set against the middle of the ridgepole, and Amar the Scabhead, picking up a struggling goat and holding it in his arms, climbed. He sat on the ridgepole, straddling it, bracing his legs against the notched pole. With one hand he stretched the goat's muzzle skyward; with a knife in the other he sawed at the animal's throat.

"In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful," he said.

The goat gave a convulsive kick which nearly sent its owner earthward, and blood spurted out, over Amar's skirts, over the ridgepole, and down on the ground below. Amar sheathed his knife, wiped his hands, greasy with blood, on the animal's back, and cast the carcass down. He was about to descend when a small boy burst into view, the sides of his jellaba flapping as he ran.

"A grave has been opened!" he cried. "A grave has been opened! It is a small grave, it must be a child's!"

Amar the Scabhead slid down the pole, and joined his brothers Mimun and Hamid and the others who were present. Many voices started talking at once.

"It must be the child we buried yesterday, the son of Si Bushtar the schoolmaster!" said a man who had accompanied the funeral.

"The Hedawi!" cried others. "It must have been the Hedawi! He was seen going upstream after he left Mukudem, and no one knows where he got to!"

"He went up through Telmest," said Mimun the son of the Malim Hamidu. "My father was at the mosque, and saw him go upstream."

"He did not!" cried another. "I have come from Telmest this morning and no one in the village saw him."

The men did not wait to argue any further. They started out at a run up the ridge, while the goat lay on the ground unattended. They were still running when they came to the graveyard. There lay a pile of fresh dirt beside a gaping hole, and the head and torso of a child's carcass. The legs and arms had been cut off. The men shuddered.

Amar the Scabhead pushed the body back into the hole with a stick, and others piled dirt in with their feet. Amar the Scabhead and Mimun started up the mountain, over a goat trail, the only one which led from the graveyard. Those who had filled the grave followed them, and others spread out on the side of the mountain, so that soon the party was searching fan-wise.

A loud shout halted the men for a moment. Some one had found what was left of a hand. Then men became more and more angry. They climbed over cliffs and through pine trees, tumbled over precipitous rye fields recently planted, ran through vineyards, and clambered over the ridge at the top.

This was a high mountain, and soon they would be in land belonging to the Beni Urriaghel, with the adjoining valley of which they were on bad terms, but at present this did not greatly matter. Pausing to look along the

ridge to either side, they saw no one. They looked ahead of them. Beyond was the shoulder of the Jebel Hammam, its top still gleaming with snow. Silver through the mist shone the bed of the Ghis, and a faint brightness at the horizon was the Bay of Alhucemas.

They did not look, however, at these things. Scanning the slope of the mountain beneath them, they inspected every rock, every gully, every tree. Far down below, two men of Beni Urriaghel were ploughing terraces. Halfway down a boy sat on top of a rock, watching goats, and leaning on a long flintlock rifle. Seeing the men at the top of the mountain, he called in a loud, clear voice to the ploughmen below. These latter, abandoning their ploughs and snatching up guns from the sides of terraces, started upward. They looked like scorpions with short stings, they were so small. Amar the Scabhead, who had brought his Spanish rifle, unslung it from his shoulder and snapped back the bolt to inspect the breech. Satisfied that it was properly loaded, he closed it.

One of the watchers shouted, and pointed to the left. There could be seen a shallow rock-shelter, its hollow shadow in sharp contrast to the rest of the world on this morning of bright sun. The edge of the shadow had moved. The Ulad Abd el Mumen started at a run, and rushed toward it. The gravel and broken rock tumbled ahead of them in little avalanches. When they came to the rock-shelter they peered into it.

In the furthest recess crouched the Hedawi, clutching his foul package and his stick. His puffed lips were raised in a snarl, and saliva flowed between his broken yellow teeth. Amar the Scabhead shifted his rifle to his

left hand, and reached down for a stone, as the others were also doing.

A stone hit the Hedawi on the arm. He dropped his bundle. It opened, and a bone, to which still clung a few shreds of flesh, fell out. The men were furious now, and stones flew like drops of rain in a tempest. The Hedawi made little noise, and did not move far. It was not long before nothing of him protruded from the rock pile.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen had been so angry that most of them had failed to notice the approach of the two Urriaghlis, but Amar the Scabhead had stopped throwing stones when they drew near, and had walked up to them.

"What did he do?" asked one of the Urriaghlis.

Amar the Scabhead twisted his lips into a grimace.

"Ate a baby," he said quietly.

The Urriaghlis shrugged their shoulders, and one of them spat on the ground. They turned and went down to their work.

When Amar the Scabhead picked up the carcass of his goat where he had dropped it from the ridgepole, he found it crawling with ants.

CHAPTER VII

SLICED WATERMELON

Abd el Kadher the schoolmaster's son from Beni Tadmut came back. It had been five years since he had run away to the country of the Arabs, after getting Muna, the sister of Amar the Scabhead, in trouble. Shortly after his departure he had heard that Muna had disappeared, but he did not know exactly what had happened. Amar the Scabhead and his brothers were very friendly with Abd el Kadher when he returned.

In the Vale of Iherrushen, marvellously discovered and peopled by Abd el Mumen of pious memory, the two clans of Ulad Abd el Mumen and Beni Tadmut had grown up side by side, with occasional difficulties such as that which at present concerns us, but on the whole living in comparative peace. The Malim Hamidu's beard was now almost completely white. Of his three surviving sons, Amar the Scabhead, Mimun, and Hamid, the first two were already married, and all considered themselves at length to have become full-grown men.

The Sunday after the homecoming of Abd el Kadher the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut, Amar the Scabhead arose in the middle of the night, in the small house of his own which he now occupied. Amar's wife stirred when he lifted himself up from the mat, after laying his share of the blanket over her hips and shoulders.

"Where are you going, Amar?" she asked.

"I am going to the Monday market of Beni Amart to buy you a new necklace. If any one asks, tell them that you do not know, that I simply left, and will be back to-morrow. Do not try lying. I can do it much better later than you can to-day."

"What are you buying beside a new necklace, Amar?"

"The necklace and nothing else; but I may bring a friend home with me. Brush out the other room, and build a fire in it to take out the dampness. But don't do this when the other women are present."

While he was talking, Amar moved about the room, filling his scrip with supplies for his journey; cartridges, raisins, and roasted barley. He also took with him a handful of Spanish dollars. Last of all he lifted his rifle off its peg, and slung it over his shoulder.

Luckily a half moon was shining, which enabled Amar to see the trail ahead of him. He strode up the side of the mountain, and the dogs of Beni Tadmut set up a fearful yelping as he slipped and rolled a spadeful of stones down toward them.

He followed the trail which runs parallel to the river, upstream, and well above the level of the houses. Having crossed the brook of Argiwen near its source, he strode upward over the top of the crest, where he sat down for a moment to get his breath. The trail now led northwestward down the other side, past the Hedawi's cave, and above some houses that belonged to the Beni Urriaghel. Amar the Scabhead kept well above these, high enough so that the dogs would not hear him, and contouring the mountainside came to the head of the

stream which waters the Urriaghlis' terraces. Over a saddle-backed divide, and he was in Beni Amart.

Ahead of him lay a flat plateau, dotted with cedar, and cleft, a mile or so from its edge, by a gaping red canyon. Amar ran down one side of this and up the other, zigzagging back and forth along the trail which the wisdom of generations of donkeys had dictated. Emerging from the plateau of cedar, he walked on rolling country, darkly shadowed in the moonlight by the foliage of evergreen oaks.

At length the dim whiteness of the moonlight took on colour. The black of the oak clumps turned slowly to a dull and tenebrous green, and the ground underfoot became brown. Amar, pausing to look over his shoulder, beheld a pinkness in the sky above the peaks of Beni Tuzin, the sharp outlines of which became a bold silhouette standing in front of the earliest tints of dawn. Day came quickly now. Soon the sun was half up, and the earth grew warmer. Amar began to sweat within his woollen clothing.

The Monday-market had begun when he arrived. Women sat in groups behind piles of bread, of eggs, and of prickly pears. The butchers had commenced their slaughtering, and the smell of goat entrails and of blood was in the air. The dogs of Beni Amart had already assembled to harry the butchers, and to lap at rivulets of blood.

Amar the Scabhead walked about through the market slowly, looking at everything, and speaking little. Men appeared walking from all directions toward the market. There were long strings of these approaching men, stretched out like the legs of a spider. Finally a jeweller

arrived, leading a donkey. He untied the rope which passed over the paniers and under the animal's belly, and heaved the paniers on the ground beside a small earthen dugout, sunk in the ground, its roof sodded, its front open. Into this he crawled with his paniers, and tied strings across the front of his booth. On these strings he hung his jewelry.

After he had finished, Amar approached the shop and commenced fingering the wares. He selected a silver chain with a half dozen peseta pieces dangling from its middle.

"How much is this?" he asked.

"Five dollars."

"I will give you three."

"The price is five dollars. If you do not want it you may go elsewhere."

Amar was in no mood for haggling. He counted out five dollars, handed them in to the shopkeeper, and took his purchase. This he wrapped in a red kerchief and put in his scrip. He wandered about for another hour, watching every one covertly. At length he saw the man he wanted, a tall, cadaverous, middle-aged man, long bearded and clad in a ragged black jellaba. The man was talking with a group of four. Amar drew near the group slowly, and at length was standing next them.

"Si Hammu," said Amar the Scabhead, "come help me buy some cloth."

The tall man followed him through the market, toward a small hummock whereon a clothseller was spreading his wares, black jellaba cloths and brown, and rolls of white American cotton, with blue writing stamped

on it in many tongues, Arabic, Hebrew, and the languages of Christians.

"This cotton is not very strong," said Amar, crumpling it in his fingers.

"No," said Si Hammu, "there is some better over yonder."

Not heeding the protests of the merchant, Amar and Si Hammu went on until they came to another.

"I guess I don't want any cotton after all," said Amar. "Come over beyond the butchers' section with me. I want to talk with you."

Having walked past the butchers' malodorous slaughter ground, they sat beneath an oak tree. Si Hammu looked up in the branches, as if he were afraid some one had climbed there to listen.

"I want you to come home with me to-night," said Amar, "and make me some of what you make."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Si Hammu, rising as if to leave.

"Sit down," commanded Amar the Scabhead, and Si Hammu obeyed. "Don't try to appear innocent. I know what trade you follow. How much will it cost?"

"Well," replied Si Hammu in a tone a little above a whisper, "I will have to stay with you at least four days. You will have to find the ingredients, and it will cost one hundred dollars."

"I do not own one hundred dollars," said Amar the Scabhead truthfully, "but I will give you fifty. And you will come. How would you like it if I went back to the market and cried out loudly, telling people what you do for a living?"

Si Hammu shuddered, and running a bony hand over

his hollow cheeks and down his beard, composed himself.

"They would not believe you, and you could prove nothing. But fifty dollars will be enough, since you have no more."

Si Hammu stayed a week in the room which Amar's wife had prepared for him, going out only at night time, and then only after every one else had fallen asleep. Amar also was kept busy. He went high up on the mountain where there were caves, and crawled far into them with a basket. With this basket he scooped about in the air, until he had caught seven bats. These he put in a bag and brought to Si Hammu.

He waded across the water of Iherrushen and far up the Bayu, where its sides were precipitous and no one passed, and killed seven frogs with stones. These he likewise brought to Si Hammu. He searched for three days on the mountain between the Bayu and the Tighza, and it was a steep climb to get there. Finally he killed a cobra, and brought it to Si Hammu. Si Hammu himself plucked herbs on the mountain by moonlight, but when Amar the Scabhead came into the room with him Si Hammu hid these herbs so that Amar might not see what kind they were. He wanted no partners and no rivals.

On the seventh night when Amar entered the room Si Hammu handed him a jar half filled with a brownish paste. Amar reached into his scrip and counted out fifty pieces of silver.

"If it does not work," he said, "I will come up to Beni Amart and kill you."

"No need," answered Si Hammu, "it has never failed

yet. When it does I am willing to take what comes to me."

Si Hammu left in the night, just as he had come. Amar took a piece of beef out of a pot. A bull had been killed that day at the mosque, and all of the Ulad Abd el Mumen and Beni Tadmut were eating meat. They were also eating it at the mosque of Mukudem, where a forequarter had been given to the preceptor and students. Amar dug a small daub of paste out of the pot with the end of his knife. He smeared this on one side of the meat, holding the chunk carefully by the other side. Then he walked a distance from the house, and ran his knife several times into the ground.

Having hidden his pot, Amar stole by devious routes to the house of Mokaddem Ahadad, the fat warden of the mosque of Mukudem. It was the Mokaddem Ahadad who had tried to send the Hedawi away from his mosque several years previously. When Amar waded the Iherrushen, he held the chunk of meat high over his head.

The Mokaddem Ahadad's dogs are the only ones in the Vale of Iherrushen which do not bark when strangers approach the house in the night. The students in the mosque say that this is because women who come to the mosque from afar to sleep in it and become pregnant through the power of the saint creep out in the middle of the night and visit the plump warden, but this is only gossip and has not yet been proved. At any rate, the dogs are used to people coming in the night, and do not bark.

Amar crept up to the refuse pile some yards from the door. A lop-eared yellow bitch was sleeping on it. As

Amar crawled nearer, the bitch awakened. She drew back her lips and snarled, but did not bark. Amar threw her the piece of meat. She leaped upon it and swallowed it.

During the next ten days Amar the Scabhead became very pious. He went constantly to Mukudem to pray in the mosque, to listen to the preceptor, and to joke and play checkers with the students. He also sat in the room with the councillors of all Iherrushen, the married men who represented their clans and villages in the common body of government, of which he was a member. Abd el Kadher, the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut, was not a member, but he had become very wise during his sojourn in the outside world, and came often to tell the students of his experiences, and to show off his Arabic.

On the third day the lop-eared yellow bitch sickened, and lay listless and dull of eye on the manure pile. On the fourth, fifth, and sixth days she had convulsions, and on the seventh she died.

One day about a week later Amar the Scabhead smeared a little of the paste on one side of his dagger, high up near the hilt. He left the dagger partly drawn out of its scabbard, so that the part with the paste on it would not get inside. He picked a huge watermelon in his garden, and carried it under his arm upstream to the mosque at Mukudem. When he waded the river he held the watermelon and his scrip in one hand, and his knife in the other.

Inside the mosque Amar found his father, two councillors from Tarosht, and a half dozen students. Abd el Kadher was there also, telling the students stories. At

sight of the watermelon Abd el Kadher and the students arose and, leaving their room, followed Amar into that of the councillors.

"Ho, Amar!" cried the Malim Hamidu, his father, "come in and sit down. This is a fine watermelon you have brought the saint. Do you want me to cut it?"

"No," replied Amar, "I prefer to cut it myself, for you would give yourself too large a piece, and you are too old to be eating much watermelon."

"Isn't it a beauty?" said Abd el Kadher, tapping it. "It is like the ones we used to eat in Fez while I was living there."

"Yes," replied Amar. "I hear that they have fine ones in the country of the Arabs, and much sweeter. Ours are likely to cause bellyaches if eaten in too great quantity."

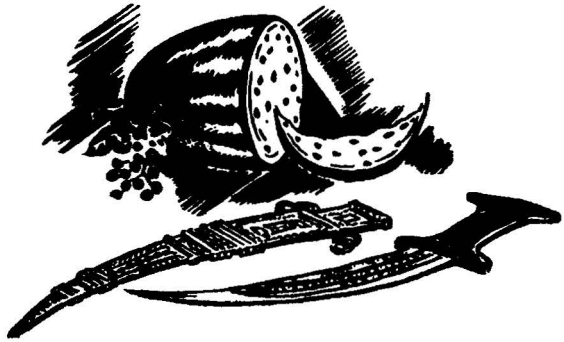
Amar cut the melon in two with his knife. It was the Soussi dagger which Ali the Yellowhaired had long ago given him, a fine long blade. He did not cut the melon straight through, but cut so that the point reached halfway, and then turned it around. He cut one half into quarters, and then eighths, and then sixteenths. He did the same with the other half, handing the pieces around as he did so. Luckily there was an even number of people in the room. At last all were eating but Amar himself and Abd el Kadher, the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut.

"I have left you until last," said Amar to Abd el Kadher, "so that we may eat from the same piece. Honour is due him who has travelled far and has returned."

Amar, while saying this, cut the remaining section into two pieces, with the high part of the blade, near the

hilt. He took care to cut it so that when the two halves fell apart, owing to the convexity of the rind, their surfaces did not touch. Picking up his piece he ate it, and Abd el Kadher did the same with the piece nearest him. They were very friendly that evening, and sang Arabic songs together until late into the night.

Three days later Abd el Kadher took ill, and lay weak on his pallet. On the fourth, fifth, and sixth days, he had convulsions, and on the seventh he died. The Scab-head Amar went to his funeral with the men of Beni Tadmut, and helped carry the mosque door whereon the corpse rode to its grave.



CHAPTER VIII

HOW TROUBLE BEGAN

In the Rif marriages are usually within the clan, as were those of Amar the Scabhead and of Hamid, which had taken place during the two years which had elapsed since the poisoning of Abd el Kadher, the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut. Sometimes, however, an important man takes a wife without payment, from some outside group, as an honour to himself and as a protection to those who give her, since following the marriage the two clans become allied; and to refuse such a proffered wife would cause a great scandal. When the Malim Hamidu was younger, he married in this way a woman from the Asht Haddu n Mehend, a clan of the Beni Urriaghel living to the north of the ridge behind the village of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, the ridge which separates the Vale of Iherrushen from Beni Urriaghel.

This woman was the mother of Mimun and Hamid. She was beautiful as a girl, and handsome and intelligent as a woman of middle age. The Malim Hamidu was very fond of her, as were all of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. Hence when her family, the Asht Haddu n Mehend, commenced fighting with their neighbours of Timarsga, and getting the worst of it, came in mass to the mosque of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, the councillors of Malim Hamidu's clan could not refuse them.

All the men of Ulad Abd el Mumen, and all of Beni

Tadmut as well, went over the mountain to Timarsga to fight their kinsmen's enemies. The Beni Tadmut had not wished to go, saying for excuse that the Asht Haddu n Mehend were no allies of theirs; but since the Ulad Abd el Mumen and the Beni Tadmut had always done things together, from the time of peace and expansion down to the present days of sorrow and of cramping, the Beni Tadmut yielded to fear of shame and hope of pillage, and hence went along.

One misty morning found the allies in position outside a group of four enemy houses, and the enemy's mosque. The houses were built on the side of a slope over a stream. Below the houses lay terraces of maize and a flat place shaded by olive trees, on the border of which was situated the mosque. On the other side of the flat place stood a round olive mill on a concave grinding stone, and the heavy wooden frame with its wooden screws, the oil-press.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen crouched behind a tumbled mass of boulders on the opposite slope, on about the same level as the houses. Malim Hamidu was there with his three sons, Amar the Scabhead, Hamid, and Mimun, and with the others of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. There were about fifty of them in all. Across the stream, up behind the houses in a transverse gully, they could dimly see the yellow turbans and brown pigtails of the Beni Tadmut. It was cold and damp, and the sun was not shining. It was hard to distinguish faces in the faltering morning light. The Asht Haddu n Mehend, the kinsmen of Mimun's mother, lay scattered behind rocks upstream.

On the ground in the depression behind the rocks

which sheltered the Ulad Abd el Mumen lay a bag of gunpowder, a smaller bag of balls, and a leathern scrip full of cartridges for those who had European rifles. Most of the weapons, however, were flintlocks, and most of them had been made by the Malim Hamidu. The powder and ball had been paid for out of the treasury of the mosque. Amar the Scabhead had a bolt-action rifle, of which he was very proud. Amar foresaw, with the others, that action might soon take place. It was just light enough now to aim at people. The enemy had not escaped during the night; a guard by the river bed had seen to that. The guard had just been called in; its members would have exposed themselves needlessly with the arrival of dawn.

The others were refreshing their primings. They had not fired for hours, and the powder in the pans was damp. Some were drying the pieces of iron on which the flint strikes by rubbing them with turban ends which had been tucked under, against their heads. Amar the Scabhead reached down for a handful of cartridges, to set on the rock near his face.

As he resumed his position, he saw a man running downstream from the group of houses. He was stooping over and running as fast as he could. He looked like an Urriaghli. Amar shot him.

The report brought every one to his post. The man put one hand to his chest, and straightened up. Then he stopped for a moment, and fell over backwards, tumbling into the river where the onrushing water crashed him into rock after rock, until at length he came to rest between two sharp boulders on the side of the stream.

The dogs in the besieged houses commenced barking,

producing a fearful disharmony of staccato yips. No shooting, however, accompanied the barks. When finally these subsided, a man was heard shouting across the stream. It was a certain Absalem, one of the Beni Tadmut.

"You have shot one of our men!" he screamed.

More shouts came: "It is the Malim Hamidu's fault, for marrying outside!" "He brought us here!" "We must have payment from Malim Hamidu, let him come out!"

"I will go to them," said the Malim Hamidu quietly, tightening his belt.

"You will not, I beg you," cried Amar. "I shot him. Why should my father take the blame? I am not afraid of them. It was a mistake. Stay here, please!"

Amar the Scabhead had too much respect for his father to prevent him from eventually having his will. But he nevertheless hampered him, flinging his arms about the old man, and talking to him excitedly. All of the Ulad Abd el Mumen were talking, the others quietly, and all of them except Amar and his father were crawling about near the edges of the rocks, finding better positions for defence. Seeing the two disputing, and fearing that one of them would expose himself, Si Bushtar, the schoolmaster of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, laid down his rifle and leaped down the slope to one side, out of line from the enemy houses, but exposed to the Beni Tadmut's view.

"I am coming!" he shouted in a loud voice. "Do not fire!"

He had gone but five steps when a bullet struck him in the jaw and came out the side of his neck. As the first

blood spurted from his severed jugular, the sound of the shot rang.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen paused for a brief second, aghast. Then they commenced firing. A heavy fusillade crashed out from both sides. Amar the Scabhead ran to the edge of the hiding-place, and falling on his stomach, crawled down to the stricken schoolmaster. Gripping him under the armpits, he dragged him into shelter. Snatching off his yellow turban, he wrapped it tightly around the schoolmaster's neck, putting a pebble under it in such a position that it would press on the jugular below the wound. The blood kept flowing. The sun came out from behind a cloud, and a red pool forming in a depression of the rocks gleamed dully.

Amar pressed his thumb on the vein and removed the turban. It was choking the schoolmaster, who was gasping and spitting blood. The schoolmaster commenced muttering prayers incoherently. A rasping, rattling noise came out of his throat, for his windpipe had been pierced.

The shelter in the rocks where the Ulad Abd el Mumen had taken up position had once been used for goats. Two younger men, students in the Mukudem mosque, pulverised dry goat droppings and mixed them with spittle. They plastered a poultice over the wound. Amar's thumb grew tired, and he shifted hands.

Two of the Beni Tadmut crawled out to pick up their dead man from the stream. They were both hit, one in the wrist and the other in the hip. They crawled back. Meanwhile the Asht Haddu n Mehend, the allies of the Malim Hamidu, had deserted their position upstream, and very slowly crawled to where the Ulad Abd el

Mumen were. They proceeded so carefully that not one of them was even wounded.

The people besieged in the houses, the Ulad Amar u Aissa of Timarsga, watched this scene with great satisfaction. They did not fire a shot, nor did one of them emerge. They were well provisioned, and had plenty of water. For them to commence operations might reunite their besiegers.

The Malim Hamidu held council with the leader of the Asht Haddu n Mehend, his allies. The leader was one Si Buselam, his brother-in-law.

"Now we are ruined," said Si Buselam, shaking his head. "If you leave they will come out of their houses, and will have descended the valley and chopped down our olive trees before night. They are sixty and we are but fifteen."

"You will have to lose your trees," said the Malim Hamidu, "and come home with us. There is much trouble ahead for the Ulad Abd el Mumen. This exchange of killings will not end it. If you go home and we go home, we may both be beaten. We had better stay together. I may be able to patch up a temporary truce with the Beni Tadmut. We have land aplenty, which you have not. You have no allies in Beni Urriaghel; you had better come."

Si Buselam agreed. "You are right, but it is unpleasant to contemplate. It is a good thing that our women are in the Vale of Iherrushen, with your people."

Nothing could be done before night. When it was completely dark, and luckily there was no moon, each side picked up its corpse and returned home, taking separate paths.

CHAPTER IX

DELIBERATION

On the day after the shootings in the Beni Urriaghel country, the Ulad Abd el Mumen and the Beni Tadmut held a truce by tacit mutual consent, so that each might bury its dead. They owned but one mosque between them, that which their ancestor Abd el Mumen had found miraculously builded long ago, when he had entered the valley full of wonder, intent on the establishment of a pious lineage.

There was a slight argument between the men from the two clans sent to fetch the door of the mosque. The Ulad Abd el Mumen got there first, and took the front door. Luckily there was a back door as well, and the Beni Tadmut took this with much grumbling. If there had been but one door the truce would not have held.

They buried their dead in opposite ends of a single graveyard. The men dug furiously, throwing up the loose clay below the gravel with their short-handled hoes. Students from both villages chanted, each group at the grave of its kinsman. When the ceremonies were over, the two groups walked separately homeward. Each took care that the other should not lead, for all were unarmed; hence the procession changed from a slow to a quick walk and from a quick walk to a run. Arriving at the mosque, a man of each clan stayed be-

hind to fit the door back in its place. The others did not wait for them.

When the Ulad Abd el Mumen and the Beni Tadmut reached their houses, they saw many men walking and running down the edge of the stream. Looking eastward from promontories, they could see others travelling westward from the direction of Tiddest, and an assembly gathering under the olive trees of the old Sunday market place, just below the houses of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, where the Wed Tlat flows into the Bayu. Si Buselam the Urriaghli, the Malim Hamidu's brother-in-law, came out of the latter's house.

"The council is meeting," he said. "All the clans of Iherrushen, Tiddest and the rest of Ikhuanen, the councillors of Temjunt and of Ikaroen, all have come. They want you down there at once, but have forbidden us."

The councillors of the Ulad Abd el Mumen and Beni Tadmut, about a dozen men from each clan, armed themselves and went down to the meeting. Those who were not councillors and who were old enough to fight likewise armed themselves, and sat about on the stones which lined the mouth of the Tlat, in two groups, each near a place of defence. The Urriaghlis sat on the ground in front of Malim Hamidu's house, viewing the proceedings from afar.

The Malim Hamidu was the moderator of all the councillors of the Iherrushen, and had held this office for twenty years. All of the Iherrushen councillors, even those of Beni Tadmut, sat together in a group, with the Malim Hamidu in front of them, near the centre of the area. The other groups occupied the other three quadrants, each with its moderator in front.

The moderator of the Ikhuanen was the Hajj Bukkeish, a bulky man of less than thirty years, reddish haired and broad of face. Although still a young man, he had risen to leadership among the Ikhuanen; he had been on a pilgrimage, and had fought the Spaniards outside the walls of Melilla. It was he who now owned the fine house of Afussa which Moh, the father of the Malim Hamidu, had a generation ago by trickery builded on a flat step of the mountain. After Moh's death, while the Malim Hamidu was in Taghzuth, this house had gone from the possession of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, and Bukkeish would never give it up. The Hajj Bukkeish entertained lavishly, and was becoming very rich. He and the Malim Hamidu were the two most important men in the council.

The other two moderators were Bu Zkri the Black of Ikaroen, a tall, swarthy man with slightly negroid features, and Kaddur of Temjunt, stocky, hook-nosed, and heavily bearded. These two were not so important. Every man in the meeting sat on one leg, with the other held ready to spring. Each man clutched his rifle by the trigger-guard.

The Hajj Bukkeish started the meeting. "You have just held your funerals, and your truce is ended. You must stop fighting. You have each killed one man and you are quits. We have been talking it over before your arrival, Bu Zkri, Kaddur, and I. There is only one thing for you to do; you must all go up to Mukudem, to the Friday mosque of all the Iherrushen, and there you must join hands over the body of the saint and swear an oath. You, Malim Hamidu, must let one of your sons take a

woman of Beni Tadmut in marriage, and the Beni Tadmut must take one of your daughters."

"That is all very well for you," replied the Malim Hamidu, stroking his beard, "but all my sons are already married, and none of them is ready to take a second wife. And we are hardly quits, for two reasons: Amar shot one of their men by accident—he was creeping from the houses we were besieging. It was hardly light, and the man had no business there.

"It was Amar's duty to shoot. The guard was supposed to have returned from the river bed to its posts. The man who was killed must have been trying to steal a chicken. Then they shot our schoolmaster, Si Bushtar, deliberately, when he was going over unarmed to make peace. Our schoolmaster is worth more than the man they lost, and was shot under different circumstances. If you want peace, they must pay bloodmoney, and a fine. We will pay bloodmoney too, but no fine. Their payment will be greater than ours. You cannot have peace until you settle justly, or bad blood will continue. And this business of marrying between us will do no good, because we are already related, even in this generation."

At this the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut arose from behind the Malim Hamidu's back and shouted: "It is all very well for you to decide things, when we have no voice! The moderator of the Iherrushen is on the other side!"

The Malim Hamidu turned around and looked at the speaker. "If you have anything to say, let us hear it," he said.

The schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut strode through the

assembly of his fellow councillors, into the middle. He remained standing.

"Sit down!" ordered Bukkeish.

He sat down.

"I agree with the Malim Hamidu that this marriage business will do no good," he commenced, in a slightly nasal voice. "You have all overlooked the main point of the affair. The Ulad Abd el Mumen must send those guests of theirs back to Beni Urriaghel. Look at them sitting on the bank up there, watching us! We can have no peace while they are present; they are like ticks on a dog's neck. There are too many of them, and there is not land enough to support them. They will be taking our terraces, and stealing from our trees. They started this trouble, and we must pay for their quarrels. We have suffered enough from them already; they are no allies of ours. If the Malim Hamidu will send them home this afternoon, then we will talk about peace. Then we will pay our bloodmoney, and, if the whole council of the tribe demands it, a fine. In regard to that, there is not a whole council here. Why have the others not come?"

At this the swarthy Bu Zkri the Black of Ikaroen spoke up, in a deep voice. "The other councillors have trouble enough at home. Besides, they do not consider this dispute of yours important enough to justify the risk of getting embroiled in one of your fights. You people haven't enough cattle to warrant being punished."

"If you talk like that, Bu Zkri the Black, you will have trouble in plenty," said the Malim Hamidu severely. "Where you have cattle, we have armed men, who can

handle you and your neighbours now or at any time. Be civil or you will leave the meeting on a door."

Bu Zkri the Black flushed beneath the duskiness of his skin. He lowered his eyes and remained silent.

"Very well," said Bukkeish, ignoring the last set-to, "the Beni Tadmut wish the Urriaghlis to leave. I think that they are right. What do you think, Kaddur of Temjunt?"

"You are right," nodded Kaddur, "send them out and we will have peace."

"When I was young," said the Malim Hamidu, "I was given a wife by the Asht Haddu n Mehend. She has given me no trouble, and her family has always been my friends. They have helped us, and we have helped them. We have been like brothers, and we have sworn oaths together. If we send them home now, they will be slaughtered. All the rest of Beni Urriaghel will battle them; they have already burnt their houses, and cut down their trees. We will suffer great shame. We cannot send them back; it would be the act of swine. Do my men agree with me?"

The Malim Hamidu looked around at his followers. All the councillors of the Ulad Abd el Mumen agreed, by voice and by gesture. The councillors of Beni Tadmut looked sullenly at the locks of their rifles.

"You finally refuse?" queried Bukkeish.

"We do."

"Then you will pay your bloodmoney, and the fine will be paid. We will determine the amounts, and collect on the spot."

"You will collect no fine and no bloodmoney," cried

a man of Beni Tadmut, "as long as the Asht Haddu n Mehend remain in the Vale of Iherrushen."

With this the councillors of Beni Tadmut arose cautiously and walked backward to the mouth of the Tlat. Here they joined their kinsmen, and proceeded home.

"Very well," said Bukkeish, as they commenced to leave, "we will not force the collection now. We will get the whole tribal council together, and then you will pay more."

"By then," said the Malim Hamidu, "you will argue over more than two killings. You will have much bigger business. I can see things lowering ahead."

The Malim Hamidu set his rifle down and cast his hands upward in prophecy, tilting his beard as he turned his closed eyes toward the sky.

"I can see dogs walking out of my house, their tongues out, licking their lips. I can see men falling into the stream and being swept downward. I can see many vultures gathered in the Vale of Iherrushen, holding a council over the bones of the dead. I can see women, starved and naked, lurking in the shadows of rocks. I can see strange men clad in iron tramping up the valley, firing houses and stacks, casting filth into springs, and shouting hideously in an inhuman jargon. I can see a company of jinns and ogres, their lips slobbering with fright, running up the valley ahead of them. And then nothing but fire and smoke, and the earth opening."

The Malim Hamidu's ecstatic vision cast awe over the assembled men. Each arose and departed in his own direction.

CHAPTER X

DEATH AND RETRIBUTION

The next day was the day before the feast of Aid el Kebir. This is the most important event on the Mohammedan calendar, and is everywhere celebrated by feasting, prayer, and in the Rif by a dramatic carnival. Fighting is strictly forbidden during it and murder which takes place on any one of the three days during which it lasts is a loathsome thing.

So busy had the Ulad Abd el Mumen been during the last few days that they had not thought about it, and were ill prepared. The Malim Hamidu had left his house, and was going about among the houses of his clan beseeching his kinsmen to observe it properly, and admonishing them to avoid all hostilities while it should last; to do nothing which would incite the Beni Tadmut to bloodshed.

Mimun and Amar the Scabhead had shut up their houses and moved, with their wives and small children, to their father's larger dwelling. Hamid and his family had gone to the house of the schoolmaster, since his wife had been the schoolmaster's daughter, and the house was now without men.

Mimun was teaching his three year old son, Moh Umzien, to prime and fire a flintlock, without, of course, any charge in the barrel. The child was not very large and could barely lift the weapon. Mimun sat him down

in such a way that he could hold the gun over his knees. The child cocked the gun, pulling back the flint with both hands while his father held the stock and barrel steady.

"Now pour some powder in the pan," directed Mimun.

Moh Umzien leaned over and picked a powder horn from the floor. Unplugging it, he poured a large spoonful into the pan.

"That is too much, take half of it out and put it in this for the next time," said the father, handing the child the lid of a tea tin.

"But I wanted to make a big shot, father," said the child, looking upwards.

"The size of the shot depends on what is in the barrel. All you need in the pan is a little to set it off."

"All right then, I will put in just a little next time."

"Fire it now," the father commanded.

The child pulled the trigger, the flint sparked, and the powder flared with a hiss. Moh Umzien closed his eyes tightly.

"Never close your eyes," ordered Mimun. "If you do you can't see what you are shooting. If you closed your eyes you might hit me or your grandfather by mistake. Try it again."

"I would not like to hit grandfather," replied the child as he strained to recock the gun. "He wouldn't be able to pray any more, would he?"

"Come quickly," whispered Amar the Scabhead to those in the room. "There is somebody walking up the path from the river."

Amar had been on duty at the small window on the

side of the house which faced Beni Tadmut. Mimun left the child, and picking up his own weapon joined his brother.

Around a rock which hid the path came the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut, holding a goat by the horns in front of him, so that the goat would be seen first. The goat's front legs were in the air, but its hind legs pranced between those of the schoolmaster. The latter was unarmed, as were two men who followed him.

"Do not shoot," cried the schoolmaster. "We have come to make a truce."

"What for?" asked Amar the Scabhead.

The two brothers were now standing in the doorway. Moh Umzien's mother had snatched him up and carried him into a corner of the room.

"Because to-morrow is the first day of the Aid el Kebir. Nobody dares go to the mosque, and we cannot pray. We cannot feast and the schoolboys cannot put on their carnival."

"This is no time for feasting and for carnivals," said Mimun. "But if you want to pray, that is a different thing."

"Who cares about praying?" asked Amar the Scabhead. "That is a job for the old men. It will get us nowhere."

"I am ashamed," said the schoolmaster of the Beni Tadmut, "to hear such words from the mouth of the Malim Hamidu's son. It is lucky for you that he didn't hear them."

"I think, Amar," said Mimun, "that the man is right. You may not want to pray, but others will. We had better listen to him."

"What we must do," said the schoolmaster, "is to go together to the mosque, and sacrifice this goat at the door. Then we can go in and make oaths for a truce, and then people can pray. If you wish to fight, we are not afraid of you. You can start again after the Aid el Kebir is finished."

"If others want to pray," said Amar, "others can go to the mosque with you. You had better go look for my father."

"If he goes to other houses," said Mimun, "they may shoot him before they see the goat or before they see that he is unarmed. I think we had better go with him. Father will thank us afterwards."

Amar the Scabhead shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he said, "but I still think that it is foolish. The two of us can handle these three if they start anything. But I am going to search them first."

So saying he felt the cloaks of each of the three men, patting them carefully, and examining the contents of their scrips. He found no weapons.

"All right then, we will go," he said, and closed the door of the house.

They walked upward in silence. Amar kept behind the Beni Tadmut men, for he did not trust them. When they had almost arrived at the mosque, they came to a thick clump of cactus.

"You go around the left side of it, and I will go around the right," whispered Amar to Mimun.

Just as Amar had started around it, two men leaped out and seized him. Amar struggled to break away, kicking and heaving with his arms. Mimun ran to his

assistance; the schoolmaster dropped his goat and he and his two companions likewise ran toward the mêlée.

The end of a rifle was thrust from the clump of cactus. A shot rang out. It hit Amar the Scabhead in the chest, and pierced his heart. He started to cry out, but the sound ended in a slobber, as blood oozed from the corners of his mouth. He gave a last heave and went limp. Mimun hesitated a moment, and then started running downhill. Another shot rang out. Mimun was hit in the foot. He dropped to the ground, and before the assassin could reload, crawled over the lip of a bank and into a terrace of maize. Here he crawled in between the stalks and was lost to view.

The men of Beni Tadmut did not pursue him, for they saw the Malim Hamidu running up the path in their direction. The man in the cactus emerged, and ran after his companions. The Malim Hamidu had a repeating rifle. He bent down and took aim. It was long range. He killed the two men who had held Amar, in two shots. The man who had shot Amar paused behind a rock, took aim, and fired. His shot was likewise a good one. The Malim Hamidu toppled over, shot through the head.

The Beni Tadmut ran homeward, contouring the side of the mountain, slipping on loose shale as they ran. Mimun crawled out of the cornfield and tried to stand up. He fell down again when he put his weight on his wounded foot. He crawled homeward, and when his wife and mother saw him proceeding down the path in this fashion they ran out to help him in. They boiled kettles of water, and boiled olive oil and strained it through a clean cloth. They mashed dry chick-peas in

a mortar, and tried the pure fat out of mutton grease. With these ingredients and others they bathed and poulticed his wound.

Si Alush, who had been made schoolmaster of the Ulad Abd el Mumen after the sudden death of his predecessor, came in. Si Alush was a slender man, with very gentle features and a quiet manner of speech. He had studied in many mosques and sanctuaries, and had learned the art of setting bones. He could also trephine when necessary.

He felt of Mimun's foot, pressing the arch gently in different places. Once Mimun jumped, biting his lip. The bullet had lodged in the third metatarsal. Si Alush heated the blade of a knife and a pair of home-made tweezers, until both were red hot. He removed the poultices the women had applied, and seared the wound with the hot knife blade. The sharp smell of burning flesh filled the room. Thrusting in the tweezers, he groped for a moment, and then drew out the ball. The lead had flattened itself in contact with the bone, and Si Alush had been obliged to draw it out sidewise. Then the women put more poultices on the wound, but Si Alush would not let them bind it. Mimun's wife held the poultices in place with freshly scoured wool.

Mimun's wife, whose name was Maryam, was a woman of the Beni Tadmut, the daughter of a certain Haddu. This was what Malim Hamidu had meant when he had told the council that marriage with the Beni Tadmut was unnecessary. She was a tall woman, with blue eyes, and an appearance of great intelligence. She acted as midwife for the two clans, and was greatly interested

in medicine and surgery. Whenever possible she went with Si Alush to help him.

While Maryam was holding the wool in place, Si Alush whittled a stick of olive wood into shape to fit under Mimun's arch. He tried to fit it several times, before he finally produced the right shape. He sent out Hamid, Mimun's brother, who had just come in, to cut oleander switches.

Maryam was very quiet. Her concern for her husband's wound was less than her concern for the four deaths which had just taken place, and her fear for her own people. No one spoke to her but Si Alush. She had been with the Ulad Abd el Mumen but four years, and was now in an unenviable situation.

The other women were weeping, and now and then broke into wails. Men carried the bodies of the Malim Hamidu and Amar the Scabhead into the house, and students were washing them with hot water and a woollen cloth. They lifted up the heads of the dead men by means of their pigtails, so as to wash the backs of their necks and shoulders.

Throughout this scene Mimun remained silent. He was so angry that he could not speak, and if he had spoken, might have wept. He held his teeth tightly clenched and kept his gaze directed at the door. When Si Alush had finished binding the injured foot, he went over to the students, who had now finished their work, and who had commenced chanting verses from the Koran. They chanted quickly, because they had to recite the whole Koran before dawn. Candles of beeswax were brought and set about the two corpses.

Sometime during the night Mimun took his father's

repeating rifle and fifty cartridges, and crawled out of the house. He did this when people were busy, and did not see him go. He crept up past the mosque, along the slope, until he could look down, in the dim moonlight, upon the slanting roofs of Beni Tadmut. He found a good position in a crevice, barricaded himself with small stones, and awaited the dawn.

His wife Maryam likewise slipped out, carrying her son Moh Umzien, holding her hand over the child's mouth so that he would not cry out. She was afraid to stay there any longer. No one had spoken to her, and the other women had been whispering in corners. Proceeding directly to her father's house in the village of Beni Tadmut, she found her parent crouching opposite the door, clutching a rifle, when she entered. No one was sleeping here either, for one of those whom the Malim Hamidu had shot was her eldest brother. His corpse was lying on the raised sleeping platform at the end of the room.

"What are you doing here? You belong on the other side," said a younger brother.

"Be quiet," commanded Haddu, their father. "She has come home. She belongs here, and we will keep her."

"But why should we keep that brat on her back?" asked the brother. "It is the grandson of the Malim Hamidu. Some day he will kill all of us. He has the blood of jinns in him."

At this little Moh Umzien began crying. His mother took him off her back and rocked him in her arms. "Don't cry," she whispered soothingly, "don't cry, they

will not harm you. You will stay in my arms and be safe."

Her father walked over to her and reached out his hand to touch the child. Moh Umzien shrank back with a screech.

"I was only trying to comfort him," said Haddu. "He is my grandchild too."

The schoolmaster of the Beni Tadmut then entered with a half dozen literate men, whose intention it was to chant over the dead. When the schoolmaster saw Maryam and Moh Umzien he strode over to them and pointed a bony finger at the child.

"You cannot bring that whelp in here!" he shouted. "He is the blood of the Malim Hamidu. It is accursed. He will kill all of us, if we leave him. Let's finish him now."

He reached a long arm toward the baby. Maryam turned her back, clutching the child tightly. Her father leaped across the room and seized the schoolmaster by the back of the neck. He pulled him to the floor and knelt on him. Drawing his dagger, he held it to the schoolmaster's throat.

"Stand up and do your chanting!" he ordered. "Leave my grandson alone or I will kill you and all of your family! What a weakling you are to plot against a baby! You hyæna! Stand up!"

The schoolmaster stood up, and walked to the other end of the room, cleared his throat, and did as he had been bidden. The eyes of Maryam's father glittered. His cheeks flushed red under his thin golden beard. Turning to his daughter he addressed her.

"You had better go back to your husband," he said

gently. "You belong there now. It would be all right to stay with us if you had no children, but you see how events are turning. Watch over him carefully."

Maryam stood up and wrapped her child in her shawl. Carrying him in her arms, she went out again.

Mimun had seen several people going about the houses before dawn, but he had not been able to distinguish them clearly, and so had not risked a shot. He had not recognised his wife. Mimun was steeped through with wrath. He could think of nothing but the deaths of Amar the Scabhead and his father; Amar, his favourite brother, witty and wily yet recklessly brave, careless of money and indolent, yet withal a fine companion; and his father, the greatest man in the Vale of Iherrushen since Abd el Mumen himself, tall, stately, and wise, leading the council, thinking more quickly than any, a skilled worker and a cunning trader. There were no men left in the world like Amar the Scabhead and the Malim Hamidu.

Mimun was suffused with wrath. He did not think of the Aid el Kebir. He had fifty cartridges, and he would kill all of the Beni Tadmut. All of them would not be sufficient payment. What did he care for the tribal council? For the Hajj Bukkeish? They were nothing. Mimun was very angry.

The dawn came up over the nick made by the tumbling Bayu in the towering mass of mountain. A triangle of pink, a cold, cheerless colour, grew until it glowed faintly over the heights and spread to either side. The murk at the head of the valley crawled back out of sight. Everything was cold and covered with dew. After a while the sun appeared, climbing rapidly. It

grew smaller and less red. The earth became warmer.

Still none of the Beni Tadmut came out of their houses. After a while thick purplish juniper smoke oozed through the door-cracks of some of the houses; the women were starting their fires for the holiday cooking. The men must be spending much time decking themselves out in their best clothing. A little girl, armed with a pistol, came out of a house, carrying a water jug on her back. She filled it at the stream and climbed home again.

Then the door of Mimun's father-in-law's house opened. The schoolmaster of the Beni Tadmut stepped out, blinking. Mimun waited until he had moved away from the door. He was talking to somebody inside. Mimun would wait until more came out. His brother-in-law appeared, and a dozen young men, who had been doing the chanting, came after him. They were students and supposedly immune. Mimun did not care. He adjusted his sights and took careful aim. He shot the schoolmaster, his brother-in-law, and a student, one after the other. On the fourth shot his rifle jammed. Mimun cursed, and threw open the breech. He pulled at the cartridge with his fingernails, but could not move it. He pried with his knife, but broke the point off. He cursed again. Why had he not brought his father's pliers? Mimun wept. There was no one to see him. He spat and banged the rocks with his fist until his knuckles bled.

The three corpses lay there before Haddu's door. Every one alive was sheltered indoors. Mimun crawled home the way he had come, exposing himself freely. No one shot at him.

CHAPTER XI

BLOOD ON THE MOSQUE DOOR

After deliberating a while in the house of Maryam's father, the men of Beni Tadmut attached a rope to the horns of their best bull, and started down the stream, leading the animal. Three of the men carried the newly slain bodies on their backs. They did not dare to go to the mosque for its doors. Every person of the Beni Tadmut, excepting those too old to walk, went. All who had arms carried them, men, women, and children. Before passing below the houses of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, they sent scouts ahead to see if the way were clear. The Ulad Abd el Mumen were not to be seen. The procession passed their village undisturbed.

Mimun, Hamid, and a number of their kinsmen were sitting in the Malim Hamidu's house. Hamid, who got up now and then to look out of the window, announced after one of his inspections that the Beni Tadmut were passing down the valley, carrying three corpses and leading a bull.

"They will be laying a shame compulsion on Bukkeish," said Mimun. "Let them do it, they need help. They are a crowd of cowards and cheats."

"Just the same," replied Hamid, "it will be no easy battle for us once they have made allies up and down the valley. It is a fine mess you have thrust us into, killing men on the Aid el Kebir."

"Aid el Kebir be damned," replied Mimun. "They killed the Scabhead Amar by trickery, on the pretence of making a truce. What they did was worse. They deserved it. The Aid el Kebir is of no account beside our father."

"I don't blame you for being angry," said Hamid. "I am angry too. But you might have waited three days."

"In three days they would have run away, or been so fortified that we could not have touched them."

Mimun had been receiving expressions of disapproval from all of his kinsmen. They realised the significance of what he had done and Mimun himself, cooler now, was beginning to realise it too.

"I am to blame for it all," he said. "I persuaded Amar to go up to the mosque yesterday, and got the two of them killed. Now I have broken the Aid el Kebir. You are right, it is my fault, and now all of us will have to suffer for it."

"Nonsense," replied Hamid without conviction. "It was bound to happen."

Then an idea came to him.

"It follows father's vision at the council. Things like this are foreordained. Maybe it is foreordained that we will defeat them. We still have the Asht Haddu n Mehend with us, and the men of Teliwin will be coming down from the mountain and joining us as soon as they hear what has happened. All together we can hold them off, no matter how many allies they make."

The men of Beni Tadmut proceeded down the valley until they came to the flat, pebble-covered section of river bed where the Tighza joins the Bayu. The men of

Tiddest came out of their houses, and stood in their doorways watching the procession.

Crossing to the other side of the Tighza, the three men who bore the corpses stooped to enter the mosque, and those seated in the main room made way for them. They set their burdens down in the middle of the floor, and straightened them out on their backs.

Haddu, the father of Mimun's wife Maryam, who was leading the bull, hauled the beast up the steep path which mounted the bank. Others prodded the bull from behind. He led the bull straight to the door of the mosque, so that its nose touched the whitewashed planks. Twisting the bull by its horns, he lifted its head. Then drawing his knife from its scabbard, he sawed at the bull's throat, incanting the while: "In the name of God, God is Great."

Others held the bull by its four legs and tail. The animal trembled all over with a great shudder, tried to kick and uttered a feeble bellow. Blood spurted in a red stream from its throat, and struck the middle of the door. From the red splotch it trickled down to the threshold. It continued flowing and spattered over the jambs and lintel. The bull collapsed and the men holding it let it fall.

Bukkeish, opening the door from the inside, walked out and, lifting his skirts, stepped over the carcass. The men of Beni Tadmut started talking all at once.

"Silence!" shouted Bukkeish. "What is the meaning of this?"

Bukkeish knew well what it meant, but wanted a moment for deliberation.

Haddu, the father of Maryam, spoke up. "This

morning Mimun, the son of the Malim Hamidu, lay in ambush over our village and shot three unarmed men. The corpses are inside; you have seen them. The Ulad Abd el Mumen have committed sacrilege. They have broken the peace of the Aid el Kebir. Such a thing has never been done before in the Rif, since the days of heathendom. We have brought you our corpses in supplication, and we have slaughtered our bull at the door of your mosque. A powerful compulsion is upon you; you cannot resist it. A great shame has been committed, and we have laid a compulsion of shame. You must help us. We will destroy the Ulad Abd el Mumen, or drive them out of the Rif."

Bukkeish knew without being reminded that the people of Ikhuanen, over whom he held sway, must help the Beni Tadmut. No one had ever evaded a shame compulsion. It was a powerful thing, a desperate resort. He thought of the men who would be killed should he lend his influence. Perhaps he himself would be killed, or his brothers. Then he thought of the Malim Hamidu, who had been greater than he. No one was left now to eclipse his own greatness. He would stamp out the Ulad Abd el Mumen. The people of Tiddest would be the most powerful in the mountains.

"Call the councillors," he commanded.

A student with a loud voice stood on the porch of the mosque, and cupping his hands about his mouth, shouted up and down the valley.

"The council is meeting! Come, all councillors! The council is meeting!"

The cry was taken up all along the valley. Men came out of their houses, grasping their rifles. Others came

down the precipitous path from the headwaters of the Tighza, the path down which Abd el Mumen and his wife had so long ago in wonderment traversed. Then Abd el Mumen had shuddered at the scandalous heathendom of Tiddest. Now it was the men of Tiddest who were arming to punish the sacrilege which the children of Abd el Mumen had perpetrated.

The council met in the mosque, the men sitting in a circle around the corpses. The men of Beni Tadmut sat in the back of the room and on the porch, while their wives and children squatted on the bank outside.

Bukkeish dominated the council, and Haddu was the spokesman of the Beni Tadmut. The schoolmaster of the Beni Tadmut was dead, and so were three of the five men, including Haddu's son, who had helped him kill Amar the Scabhead and his father. None of the Beni Tadmut alluded to this ruse, and if Bukkeish had heard of it he did not bring the subject up.

The case was a clear one. Mimun, the son of the Malim Hamidu, had killed three men on the first day of Aid el Kebir. The clan of the victims, the Beni Tadmut, had laid a shame compulsion on Bukkeish's people. Since there was only one thing to be done, they would do it.

As soon as the decision had been reached, with but little argument, the council began considering means of attack. They must lay in provisions, and ammunition. All the guns must be gone over and put in shape. It was not quite time for the harvest, and the ripening crops of the Ulad Abd el Mumen would more than repay them for the neglect of their own.

Up the Iherrushen in the village of the Ulad Abd el Mumen plans were likewise being made. The men of

Teliwin, their kinsmen who dwelt by the springs at the top of the mountain above the Bayu, and the men of Aghabal who tilled the precipitous banks of that stream, came down in a body, bringing provisions and leading their cattle. A number came down the valley from Inhanahan, for they too were relatives and old allies of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. Luckily during these three days of the Aid el Kebir there was no more shooting, and the allies of both sides moved to their positions without hindrance.

After the Beni Tadmut had made their pact with Bukkeish they walked up the Vale of Iherrushen laying shame compulsions on all the villages along the watercourse, making allies of Izgwawen, Tarosht, Bisnes, and Telmest. The inhabitants of these villages, less warlike than the Ulad Abd el Mumen, saw their chance to be rid of the domination of the descendants of the valley's first settler. The people of Mukudem, the Mokaddem Ahadad's relatives, refused to take any part. They were saints, and their lives revolved about their sanctuary. They were immune from attack by nature of their holiness, and did not wish to lose it by joining in, since in the Rif a saint who fights is soon shorn of his sanctity.

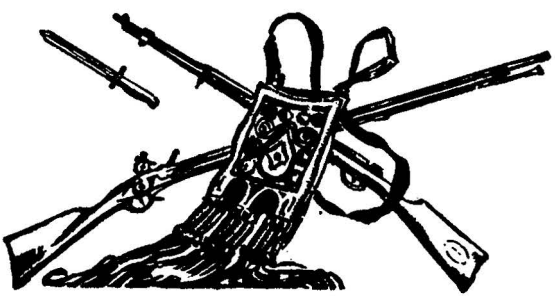
The Malim Hamidu had built a house on the south bank of the Iherrushen, just above where that stream joins the Bayu. This house could thus command the approach from upstream and downstream, and from the Bayu as well. There was a workshop connected with it, in which during his latter years the Malim Hamidu had worked on his rifles. The house had a second-story room, low ceiled and studded with loopholes for defence.

No other house in all the Iherrushen and Ikhuanen had a second story. On account of this the people of Iherrushen had often said behind the Malim Hamidu's back that he would one time pay for his arrogance and presumption in changing the style of house building. Built around a courtyard which was completely walled in, the house with its tower offered the best place of defence. In it the Ulad Abd el Mumen and the Asht Haddu n Mehend took residence. It was crowded, and many had to sleep in the courtyard. The cows and goats gathered from the village houses filled the roofed stables along the northern wall, and it soon became impossible to keep the place tidy. Luckily the door was but a few yards from the river and it would be easy to creep down at night for water. The women were already laying in supplies of water, filling all the large pots and jugs which the villagers owned.

To the south of this house and bisecting the angle made by the two rivers ran a sharp, stony ridge, which further along was connected with the mountain. At no near point was this ridge high enough to allow the enemy, if he should capture it, to shoot down into the courtyard, yet it was still high enough to offer a good position for defence. The men busied themselves feverishly erecting shelters of loose masonry along its crest, to connect it with the house so that one might crawl from the shelters without being exposed. On the other hand, if the enemy should take it, those defending the house could shoot down from the second story into the runway. All in all the house by the river was an excellent refuge from attack.

The men of Teliwin and of Inhanahan defended the

nearest house of the Ulad Abd el Mumen on the other side of the stream. This was not as good a place as the other, but could have been much worse. There were no windows on the north side toward the mountain, hence its occupants pried small holes in the wall to shoot through. Being without women who might crawl to the river at night, without much danger of being shot, they laid in copious supplies of water. Raisins, almonds, and figs; baskets of hulled rye and barley, these were laid in. Householders brought out dried haunches and flanks of wild boar which they had smoked in secret, and the men of Inhanahan some fat sides of domestic pig, which they called wild boar meat but which all could see was too fat. These things they would not have eaten in each other's presence in times of lesser stress. Hens cackling in both courtyards got under the feet of the crowded men.



CHAPTER XII

EXILE

The morning after the last day of Aid el Kebir the siege began, and it lasted for three months. The allies of the offence, entrenched on all sides of their quarry, were able to go home for fresh supplies of food and ammunition. They could take their dead and wounded home, and some of them left for a few days at a time to help their women with the harvesting. Much to the dismay of both sides the crops of the Ulad Abd el Mumen ripened, dried, and when the rains commenced falling in October, rotted in the ground. Only at night time did the allies dare leave their trenches to pick ears of maize, apricots, and figs. The dozen orange trees which the Malim Hamidu had brought as slips from Taghzuth and had planted were stripped of their fruit.

Conditions were growing bad in the two houses, since refuse piled up and decayed, and disease set in. Brittle favus scabs appeared on the temples of many of the children. It was impossible to feed the cattle, so they slaughtered many of the cows and all of the sheep, leaving alive only the goats, which could subsist on refuse, and a few cows which gave milk. Since there was not enough water for boiling, all of the meat was broiled on spits. The question of firewood, too, was becoming serious. They had burnt their last stick and were experimenting on dried cow dung, which was far from

satisfactory. Many of the men demanded that the flooring of the second story room be torn out, after all of the inner doors and shutters had been consumed. Mimun refused to allow this, and his brother Hamid supported him.

Thanks to the profession of their father, Malim Hamidu, they had started with a copious supply of ammunition. By exercising caution they had managed to make it last, although all of the cartridges were gone. They had run out of percussion caps, and could no longer reload the shells; hence every one was obliged to use flintlocks. Since many of the besiegers were armed with modern weapons, this gave the latter a decided advantage.

After three months of fighting the defenders had not lost a single man, whereas the other side, in occasional sallies and nocturnal attempts at fruit gathering, had lost twenty-seven, of whom twelve were of Beni Tadmut and fifteen of Ikhuanen. The other allies had suffered few casualties since they were less forward in fighting.

One night, however, things happened. The men defending the house on the north bank, worn from hunger and lack of sleep, let the enemy creep up on them. Half of the garrison was slumbering, and the men at the peepholes were not attending strictly to their tasks. There had been no shooting that night, and the men sent to the stream for water had come back safely. It was close in the house, with the door shut, and the reek of three months' refuse mounting from a half open pit in a corner of the room was not stimulating.

Suddenly and without warning a group of thirty or

more men ran down the slope above the house and leaped on the roof. Those at the loopholes, armed only with flintlocks, hit but three, of whom they killed one outright and wounded two. The roof, weakened by several days of rain, creaked, and clay fell in on the heads of the defenders.

The assailants thrust the muzzles of their rifles through the mud, rushes, and twigs which composed the roof, and fired at random into the crowded room. Those who had modern rifles were able to reload rapidly, and turning their weapons about, scatter their shots.

The ridgepole of the roof ran parallel to the river, and the peak of it sheltered them from a counter-attack from the house across the stream. Those on the other side could not come out to help since they knew that many sights were drawn on their door. Some crept up the ridge to their redoubts, and joined those already there, but even from this vantage point they could not train their weapons on the attackers.

The men on the roof broke through by jumping up and down until the rafters collapsed. They fell on the defenders, on whom had already fallen several hundredweight of clay. The wet mud filled the eyes of the defenders, as a hand-to-hand struggle commenced, with much knifeplay.

The attackers were in better condition than their victims, who now in close combat showed the effects of their confinement and semi-starvation. Being no match for their enemies, those of them who were able abandoned the house and ran, crouching over, down to the

river, across it, and in the gateway of the opposite house. This was opened slightly to admit them.

Including both those who were killed in the house and those who fell in the rush to safety, eighteen men perished, most of them from Teliwin, but a few from Inhanahan. Thus did the Ulad Abd el Mumen suffer their first casualties, and the added crowding in the house by the river, combined with the necessity of feeding and arming the survivors from their depleted stores, made the condition of the Ulad Abd el Mumen desperate to the breaking point. If they could hold out two days longer, they would be lucky.

On the next day all of the councillors of the tribe of Gzennaya came to the scene of fighting, remaining discreetly out of range of the redoubt. They convened on the flat olive yard of the Beni Tadmut, a short distance up the valley. Si Hamid the Brown-eyed of Azru, the spokesman of his contingent, was the leader. Bukkeish was there, and all of the besiegers who were councillors. Their absence, however, did not help the besieged, since there were many others to take their places. The Ulad Abd el Mumen succeeded in killing two councillors as they were crawling out of their trenches to attend the meeting.

The council did not last very long, since there was no disagreement among the leaders. At its conclusion, Sidi Abd er Rahman, a mad saint who wandered throughout the tribe living on hospitality, and who was liked if not respected by all the tribesmen, was sent to the house carrying a green flag, which he often bore as a badge of his pilgrimage, and a letter.

No one fired as he approached. Walking straight to the gate, he was admitted without delay.

"By the Prophet's Faith," he exclaimed, blinking his eyes and sniffing, "what a sweet place you have here. It smells like a dead mule full of maggots."

No offence was taken at this remark, despite the tension of those who heard it, since every one was used to his manner of speech and credited such indiscretions to a divine insanity. Mimun took the letter from his hand and passed it to Si Alush, who opened it and, crouching down, began to read it aloud.

"Praise be unto the only God. Peace be upon Mimun, the son of the Malim Hamidu, the son of Moh, the descendant of Abd el Mumen, and peace be upon the Ulad Abd el Mumen and upon their allies, the Asht Haddu n Mehend and upon the people of Teliwin and of Inhanahan.

"The tribal council of the Gzennaya has decided that there has been too much fighting. The Ulad Abd el Mumen must depart immediately from the tribe, since they have committed sacrilege. Those of Teliwin and of Inhanahan who remain must pay ten thousand dollars' fine collectively, and return to their homes. The Asht Haddu n Mehend must return home and remain there. The council will follow them and collect a fine later. If these things are not done at once, the council will attack immediately, and will give no quarter. Si Hamid the Brown-eyed of Azru and the council of the Gzennaya write this."

There was no argument. No one spoke for some time. The women were already busy assembling what possessions remained, and packing them. They led the

half-dozen bony cows out of their stalls, and a few goats. There was only one donkey, and him they loaded.

When the Ulad Abd el Mumen filed out onto the river bank smoke was already climbing from the houses of their village. A ridgepole fell with a crash, and the sound of axes chopping down their fruit trees was heard. Men were running from house to house, looting.

The men of Inhanahan went along with the Ulad Abd el Mumen, for their home lay on the road to Fez, whither the exiles were going. The few men of Teliwin who were still alive climbed to the trail over the Bayu which led to their mountain-top village, and the Urriaghlis, facing trouble whither they were to go, started up the Wed Tlat over the ridge to their own tribe.

Mimun headed the west-bound procession, walking slowly. He was weary and his nerves were near breaking. Maryam followed him with her son Moh Umzien, strangely hushed, walking by her side. The others fell behind, huddled in a compact procession.

They crossed the pass at the head of the Vale of Iherrushen at sunset. Some of the women looked back at their native valley for a last glimpse of it, but Mimun did not have the courage to look. Tightening his belt, he lifted his head and strode downward. That night the Ulad Abd el Mumen slept in Inhanahan, and the next day marched onward toward the Wergha and Fez, where they fancied they might find work as share-laborers for Arabs.

CHAPTER XIII

ABSALEM THE TADMUTI

One afternoon Hamid the son of the Malim Hamidu and his cousin the Vulture were driving three mules through the streets of Fez, in the direction of the northern gate. They had brought olives ripe for the pressing into the counting house of the Arab whose trees they cared for, and were now heading homeward toward el Hajeb, where they had settled. The straw paniers flapped emptily on the backs of the mules, and being lightly laden, these animals were difficult to drive, and inclined to a speed too rapid for the crowded streets through which they were passing.

Hamid ran ahead of them while the Vulture drove from behind. When they came to crowded passages, Hamid would shout: "Make way for the mules! Make way for the oil!"

Sometimes, while going through dark tunnelled alleys, he would cry out: "Make way for the camel! It is a big one!"

This warning would be followed by a frantic scampering, while the dignified burghers of Fez scrambled into portals and tried to flatten their well rounded paunches against the uncompromising surfaces of doors. Discovering the trick when Hamid and his caravan had emerged into the light, they would spit, and mutter: "Another of those mad Riffians!"

Hamid and the Vulture were close to the gate when they saw another Riffian. His back was turned toward them, but his nationality could be told at a glance by his rough brown cloak and yellow turban, as well as by the blond moustache-tips which showed at either side. The back of his neck was blistery and red, as the necks of blonds are apt to become when exposed to unwonted heat and light.

The Riffian was selling dried figs to the shopkeeper, and was arguing mightily over the price. Hamid and the Vulture halted their mules and stood behind him while he bartered. At length the merchant, a swart Soussi with globular jowls, his rotund figure thinly clad in a long indigo shirt, yielded with a sigh which made his whole person quiver under its scanty covering.

The Riffian put his money in his scrip, slung the empty fig sack over his shoulder, and turned around. He looked first at the Vulture and then at Hamid. He lowered his eyes, and blushed a fiery red, which mounted to his turban and made his whole face and head the colour of his neck. Mumbling something incoherently, he attempted to sidestep out between Hamid and the edge of the shop.

"Why so fast?" asked Hamid in Shillhah. "What are you running away from, O Absalem of Beni Tadmut? This is Fez, and a peaceful street. We hold nothing against you. Come back."

With considerable hesitation, Absalem did as he was told. "I—I—I thought you were going to knife me," he stammered.

"Knife you?" said Hamid with a smile. "How foolish that would be! It is one thing to fight in the Rif, and

another on the streets of Fez. They have jails here, and dungeons. Ali the Yellowhaired died in one, but his brother isn't going to."

"Anyhow," said the Vulture, "it is a long time since we quarrelled. We came here thinking that we would have trouble, and fall into poverty, but we have worked hard and showed these Arabs how to care for trees and vines and gardens. All that they can do is to raise wheat. They are bad farmers, and it is easy to make money. The land is good."

"Then you are no longer angry?" asked Absalem.

"Not very," replied Hamid, "just with two or three persons. As for the others, it was not their fault. They did as they were told."

"I hope," said Absalem, "that I am not one of those persons, because I am not angry with you."

"Fine!" cried Hamid. "Come to our village and we will make an oath together! You can spend the night with us, and see how things are prospering."

"How far away do you live?" asked Absalem somewhat dubiously.

The prospect of going outside the walls with these new friends frightened him a little.

"Just one hour north," replied the Vulture. "There is nothing to be afraid of. There are Arabs all around, and some of the Sultan's soldiers. Come ahead, we can all mount the mules when we pass the gate, and we can make it in fast time. You will be all right."

"Don't worry," added Hamid, "we wouldn't be so foolish as to harm you."

The mules travelled rapidly over the hills which lay to the north of Fez. The wheat had been harvested, and

the fields were brown and stubbly like a five days' beard. The three, passing the black tents and the beehive-shaped straw huts of the Arabs, conversed about their own country.

"It is not as rich as this," said Absalem, "but it is better. Things are cleaner there, and there is more water. Also the mountains are comforting, rising up like walls on either side. It seems naked here. Yet this is a rich land, and ours a poor one."

"There is nothing wrong with this country," declared Hamid, "except the people in it. The Arabs are at first amusing and then disgusting. They are easy to frighten and it is fun watching them shiver. They are treacherous in the manner of children, and once you catch them at their trickery they will back down immediately. They are also very pompous and fond of display. It is fun to do things which will rob them of their dignity."

"What we need is more Riffians to settle here," said the Vulture. "Then indeed it would be a fine country. With our hard work and small expenses we could own all the land between here and Fez in a few years, if we could get enough men down."

"But isn't it painful to be submitted to the Sultan?" asked Absalem. "How do you like paying taxes? Isn't it shameful for a Riffian to do that?"

"It would be in the Rif," answered Hamid, "but this is not our own country. Each land has its own customs. In return for the small taxes we pay, we live without fighting, and there is no bloodmoney, nor any fines to the council. We can become rich, and nobody is rich in the Rif."

"The only things that count there are strength and

bravery," echoed the Vulture, "and land that is of no worth, and guns. These things are all right when you have known nothing else, but the new life is good for a change. Here you can be sure of growing old and seeing your grandchildren and perhaps the children of your grandchildren."

"Perhaps you are right," said Absalem.

The three arrived shortly after at el Hajeb, a straggling village of flat-roofed houses, surrounded by fields better cultivated than those through which they had ridden. There were ditches led from a stream, and gardens in terraces, wherein grew all the vegetables known to Riffians. A field of coarser stubble indicated the presence of maize. Outside the village were a number of black tents, surrounded by fences of thorn. Boys were driving large flocks of sheep into these enclosures for the night.

"Those tents belong to Arabs from the upper Muluya," explained Hamid. "They are true Arabs, of the tribe of Beni Hillal. They are not like the townies in Fez, but brave men. We are quite fond of them, and they of us. They tend our sheep for us, and we pay them in grain."

They dismounted in front of a flat-roofed house and led the mules into the courtyard. Hamid and the Vulture conducted their guest into a well carpeted room, and made him tea. At length Hamid's brother Mimun, who since the death of the Malim Hamidu and the Scabhead Amar had been the leader of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, came back from threshing, and the four ate.

It was Maryam the wife of Mimun who brought the meal, a heavy wheat kuskus surmounted with chicken.

A member of the Beni Tadmut, the guest's clan, she greeted Absalem shyly, and he her likewise.

When the meal was over and more tea had been quaffed, the conversation was resumed. Hamid had neglected to take Absalem to the mosque for oath-making, and Absalem had not reminded him, so secure did he now feel.

"You said that there are some left in the Rif with whom you are still angry," said Absalem. "Who are they?"

"In the first place," said Hamid, "there is the man who shot Amar the Scabhead and our father from the cactus clump in front of the mosque. That was a cowardly trick, and we have not forgiven him. He must be put to death. If some one were to shoot him, we would be very grateful."

"Do not forget Bukkeish," said Mimun. "We owe him a score too. Were it not for him, we would have won. We would be sitting in our own houses in the Vale of Iherrushen, with the wind whistling down the valley."

"Yes, yes," said Hamid rapidly, giving Mimun a covert look, "but that would be difficult. On the other hand, it would be easy to get the fellow who shot from the cactus."

"I do not like to speak against my own people," said Absalem, "but I agree with you that it was a cowardly trick. If it had not been for him, Mimun would not have broken the Aid el Kebir, and nothing else would have happened."

At this Mimun looked at the wall over Absalem's shoulder, and remained silent. He was no diplomat.

Cunning, which had been given to Ali the Yellowhaired, to Amar the Scabhead, and to Hamid, was foreign to his nature. Strength belonged to him, and the absence of fear, and a predestination to trouble. Of these things he was well aware, and left subtlety to the one brother who remained to him. It took all of his self-control to keep him from hitting Absalem the Tadmuti with the tea-kettle.

"I am glad you understand that," said Hamid to Absalem quickly, "because now things will be easier. If he were dead we would be satisfied, and then the two families could live in peace."

After this the conversation turned to the advantages of the new country, concerning which Hamid and the Vulture were most eloquent, and Mimun grunted assent when directly questioned.

Hamid at length led Absalem the Tadmuti out into another room, and showed him a great quantity of all kinds of grain. Most of it belonged to Arab landlords, but Hamid failed to mention this. He showed his guest figs and raisins, and dried peas and beans. He led him down to the tents of his friends the Arabs, and showed him many sheep. Finally he pointed to a girl who was grinding grain in a handmill just inside a doorway. She was young and well shaped, and her face was pleasant to the eye.

"There is a good girl," said Hamid, "just right for marriage, and we have not yet found the right man. He must be a brave fellow, and a hard worker. If the right man comes down from the Rif, after the man who killed my father is dead, that girl will marry the right man, if he comes soon enough. And the right man will be given

many hundredweights of barley, and baskets of raisins. He will pay no marriage price, and we will pay the expenses of his wedding. He will settle here with us, and then we will have another Riffian in this country, and the sons his new wife will bear him."

Absalem said nothing, but looked at the girl critically, until she glanced up and saw him. He then blushed and turned away.

When they were back in the house with Mimun and the Vulture, Absalem said: "You people have fine rifles here, of Christian make. Up in the Rif some are still using flintlocks. I would like to buy a good gun and some cartridges. I intend to travel north early in the morning. You could not, I suppose, sell me a gun?"

Hamid took a rifle down from a peg and opened the breech.

"Look at the rifling," he said, as he handed it to Absalem.

Absalem squinted down the barrel, with the muzzle pointed at the fire.

"It is a good rifle," he said. "How much do you want for it, and for fifty cartridges?"

Hamid replied: "It is worth a hundred dollars in the Rif, and seventy here. But since you are such a fine friend, you may have it now for fifty."

"I have not fifty with me," said Absalem, "only twenty-five. Let me give you fifteen on account, and I will pay you the rest when I come back."

Mimun opened his mouth to protest, but a glance from Hamid caused him to close it again.

"Very well," said Hamid, "we will trust you. You

see how great is our confidence. We give it with reason, and it will be rewarded."

Three nights later, Absalem arrived home. He left his sack in his mother's house, and turned up the path to the mosque. To the right loomed up in the diminishing light the gaunt houses of the Ulad Abd el Mumen; roofless walls, and grim, ragged ridges of masonry. Between the walls where the floors had been, dry wisps of weeds waved gently in the breeze. Grass could not grow through the hard-packed clay, even though broken by frost, leavened by rain, and dried and curled by the sun.

Haddu, the father of Mimun's wife Maryam, was in the mosque, and with him Mohend the Freckled, the man who had shot the Malim Hamidu from the cactus on that memorable day, years ago, when trouble had first walked down the mountain side into the Vale of Iherrushen. Many of the Beni Tadmut had died in the three months' war which had followed, and without these men, and without the Ulad Abd el Mumen, who had been wont to assemble there with them, the mosque looked bare. Whitewash had flaked off, and the roof was in poor repair. Now that the Malim Hamidu was dead and his children departed, the mysterious tabernacle of their ancestor was becoming shoddy.

"How did you fare in Fez?" asked Mohend the Freckled.

"Well," replied Absalem. "I sold my figs, and bought a new rifle."

"Let me see it," requested the other.

Absalem handed it over.

"It is not new," said Mohend the Freckled after a careful inspection.

"It has been used very little, and is as good as new. I don't care if the stock has a few dents in it; it will shoot just as well."

"How much did you pay for it?"

"Sixty dollars."

Mohend the Freckled whistled.

"I will give you sixty-five for it this moment," he said.

"I am not selling it," replied Absalem.

"What did you hear of the Ulad Abd el Mumen?" asked Haddu, the father of Maryam. "Did you by any chance see my daughter?"

"No," lied Absalem with a shrug, "but I saw Hamid and the Vulture in the street. I stared right at them, and they ran down a side alley."

"How did they look?" asked Haddu.

"Ragged and dirty. They looked as if they had not been very prosperous."

That night Absalem went home early, but could not get to sleep. In his recklessness he arose and went out of doors. It was with difficulty that he kept his own dogs from barking. Walking down toward the stream, he at length came to a flat rock overlooking the trail which led up to Tarosht. He sat on this rock and listened to the sounds made by the river. At length he heard footsteps approaching, and lay flat behind the rock. When the man had passed, he peered over. It was Mohend the Freckled. Absalem followed, keeping well behind, and in order to make no noise, took off his sandals.

At length Mohend the Freckled arrived at the village

of Tarosht and passed the most outlying of its houses, without, by some good fortune, having alarmed its dogs. He made for a house high up on the slope, and Absalem hurried after him as inconspicuously as possible. The last part of the journey Mohend the Freckled made slowly and with caution, so that Absalem was able, by running from clump to clump of cactus, and from tree to tree, and by hurrying, crouched over, beneath the lips of terraces, to secrete himself behind the bake-oven at the edge of the courtyard, by the time Mohend had begun knocking gently on the door.

The door opened and a woman came out, dressed in an unbelted cotton shirt, with her hair hanging down her back.

"Come in, Mohend," she said in a low voice, and put both arms around him.

Mohend the Freckled hesitated, and asked: "Are you sure your husband won't be back to-night?"

"Yes," she nodded, her chin moving against his chest, "absolutely sure. He must stay four days in Melilla, and it takes three each way. That makes ten, and he has been gone five. So we have five more nights together."

When she had said this she rubbed her nose behind his ear and kissed his neck. Mohend's hesitation vanished. He put his arm around her waist and they went in, shutting the door behind them.

Absalem retreated cautiously until he was clear of the house. After climbing up the mountain slope a short distance, he took up position in a gully from which he could watch without being seen. He wanted to find out the time at which Mohend the Freckled habitually left his mistress.

Absalem knew the woman's husband well. His name was Bohosh the Pedlar, and he hawked sugar and candles in the markets, making a regular weekly round. Every now and then he went to Melilla to replenish his stock, and invariably stayed four days in the city, for he had many friends there and it took time to do business. It also took him some time to go about buying jewelry and candy with which to appease his wife upon his return. Bohosh the Pedlar was older than his wife and was a quiet man. Absalem knew, however, that he was not a coward like most pedlars, and that he was very jealous.

About two hours before dawn Mohend the Freckled came out and hurried downstream. When he had reached a point sufficiently below the houses he paused to wash himself in the river, after the fashion of good Moslems. Absalem watched this tell-tale process with satisfaction. Absalem then crept home by a higher path, and succeeded in lying down on his pallet without waking his mother.

The day after next Absalem announced his intention of returning to Fez. He said in excuse that he had spent most of his money on the rifle, which he had not intended to buy, and that in order to get enough funds to last him, he must sell some raisins. To this plan his mother sensibly protested, but without avail. The night before his departure he filled his paniers with raisins, but when his mother was out of the house he put most of the raisins back, and hid under the others most of his belongings, which had reposed in a basket hanging in a corner of the room. He filled this basket with juniper brush and put one shirt on top of it. The last time he

went to Fez he had not taken his mule, but had carried a sack of figs on his back.

Before retiring he made tea for his mother, in order to please her; and palmed a pinch of hashish, which he had bought very secretly in Fez, into the old woman's cup. This should keep her from waking until long after sunrise.

About midnight he arose and taking his new rifle with him went out quietly. Climbing up on the side of the mountain, he sought his old hiding place above Tarosht, and waited. After a little more than two hours he heard the prop grate behind the door in the house he was watching. It opened, and Mohend the Freckled came out. Absalem sighted carefully and fired once. It was an excellent shot. Mohend the Freckled fell to the ground clutching his ribs. All the dogs of Tarosht commenced barking. Absalem did not wait for further happenings, but ran home as quickly as he could, avoiding trails, and succeeded in getting inside his house without being seen.

He had lain on his pallet for over an hour, and a faint light had begun filtering under the edge of the door. Some one approached the house, and thumped loudly on the door. Absalem arose, rubbing his eyes and blinking as he opened it. Haddu was there, and a half dozen others.

"Come out!" they cried. "Mohend the Freckled has been killed!"

Absalem shook his mother vigorously until she awoke.

"Who did it?" he asked.

"They say it was Bohosh the Pedlar, coming home

early from Melilla. But Bohosh is not there now; he must have run away again."

"I will take my mule with me," said Absalem, "and continue from there on to Fez. I have a long road to travel to-day."

The men ran on, rousing others of their neighbours, and Absalem, having saddled and loaded his mule, followed them. His mother walked around the house in a daze, too befuddled to wish him a good journey.

Arrived at Bohosh the Pedlar's house, Absalem found a great crowd gathered there. The men of Tarosht and of Beni Tadmut were shouting angrily and gesticulating. Although a man of Beni Tadmut had been killed, there was no retribution because he had been caught in adultery. What made the Beni Tadmut angriest of all was that some one had cut off Mohend's genital organs and thrust them in his open mouth. Bohosh the Pedlar had a right to do this, but still it was not pleasant for the Beni Tadmut.

Absalem observed this with surprise and satisfaction. He reasoned that one of Bohosh the Pedlar's relatives, finding the corpse unsullied and thinking to repair Bohosh's hasty omission, had performed the operation. Absalem knew that he who had done it would never admit his deed, and this fortunate circumstance made the discovery of the true murderer unlikely.

Soon the students from the mosque of Mukudem arrived, and the van of the contingent from Tiddest. The preceptor of the Mukudem mosque, an imposing man with a white beard, took charge of the scene.

"Where is Bohosh?" he cried, and a hush fell over the gathering. Several at length answered that Bohosh

the Pedlar had not been seen, nor had his pack animals.

The preceptor stooped over the corpse and examined the wound.

"He was shot at long range," he announced, "for there is no mark of powder and the bullet was nearly spent."

Looking up at the crowd, he enquired: "What kind of a gun did Bohosh carry?"

"A Spanish Mauser," some one answered, "with soft-nosed bullets."

"This was done with a steel-jacketed bullet, I think, judging by the smallness of the hole. I cannot be sure until I have extracted it, for it did not come out the other side. Go bring the door of the mosque, and we will carry him down and cut him open."

This speech threw Absalem into a fright. He stood on his toes in an attempt to keep his legs from shaking. He worked his way to the edge of the crowd, and made off up the valley as rapidly as he was able, slowing down only when he saw people approaching. Many asked him what had happened, but he did not pause to give lengthy accounts. Nor, once at Telmest on the other side of the divide, did he follow the regular route. He worked northward into the Beni Amart country, thence southward and westward through Marnissa, until four days later he arrived at dusk at the door of Mimun's house in el Hajeb.

Hamid and Mimun stepped out, and looked at Absalem for a moment.

"Has the right man come from the Rif?" enquired Hamid.

"He has," replied Absalem, somewhat breathlessly.

"What happened to Mohend the Freckled?" asked Hamid.

"He was sleeping with Bohosh the Pedlar's wife, while Bohosh was away at Melilla. Bohosh came home two nights too soon and caught him. He killed him and did what is customary."

"Oh," replied Hamid. "Come in and eat. One week after these tidings have been confirmed, there will be a wedding."

CHAPTER XIV

THE STREETS OF FEZ

Hamid the son of the Malim Hamidu went one day from el Hajeb to Fez to pay share money to the rich Arab who owned certain lands upon which the Ulad Abd el Mumen worked. Hamid had recently taken to wearing, for such journeys, a white woollen jellaba, after the manner of Arabs, and a white turban. He donned these garments for trips to the city in order that he might not be conspicuous, for every one was wary of Riffians. Hamid also, of all his family, had learned Arabic most readily, and could accustom himself most easily to Arab ways, for which reasons he was usually chosen as envoy to the city.

When Hamid had finished his business, he felt depressed in spirit at the emptiness of his scrip, which flapped lightly by his side, and he wandered through the rush-shaded alleys, looking at fine garments and at jewelry, things which he would like to take home to his wife and to his children. At length he arrived at the portals of the mosque of Mulay Idris, and being in no hurry, loitered about this busy place, watching the people who passed. He saw plump merchants wrapped in many layers of finely spun garments, red-slippered women whose brown eyes sparkled adventurously above their veils, and slow moving, staring Braber tribesmen

from the Atlas, bare-legged and laden with heavy robes brilliant with embroidery.

As Hamid stood there idly watching the crowd, a rich country Arab rode toward him upon a fine mare, beautifully saddled and bridled. By the Arab's side walked his wife, holding one of the stirrups with a hand which was red with henna.

Hamid saw quickly that here might be a chance for profit; even the price of two rifles might be gained from the impending encounter. He made haste to put an angle of the mosque between himself and the place at which the Arab must dismount. At the entrance to the markets, and in front of the mosque, oiled poles span the street, permitting no horses to enter, and obliging pedestrians to crouch down in order to pass under them.

Hamid heard the Arab dismount and say to his wife: "Hold my horse here until I come back, and I will buy you a fine kerchief of silk."

When the Arab had disappeared down one of the narrow streets, Hamid walked through a side passage, and at length approached the woman from the very street down which she had seen her husband disappear into the crowd. Hamid bowed, and addressed her in flowery Arabic.

"O my fine lady," said he with great courtesy, "your husband is buying silk at the shop of my master. The kerchief which he is now buying has not its equal in all the shops of Fez. Your husband said that his mare needed shoeing, and sent me here to lead her to a stable so that it might be done while he is busy. In this way, he said, neither of you will lose time. I will bring the mare back about the time he returns. What a beauty

the beast is! Your husband bade me leave you in the shelter of the mosque, where the remains of our holy saint (upon him be Peace), will protect you. Stand right over here, out of the crowd, and you will be more comfortable."

Leading the woman across the street to the wall of the mosque itself, he took the bridle of the mare in one hand. Overcome by the oratory and unction of this sophisticated town dweller, she made no objection.

Hamid led the mare up a side street away from the district of shops until he came to a stable. Guiding her between the gates, he halted in front of the proprietor, who was measuring out portions of barley for feed.

"How much will you give me for this mare, saddle, and bridle?" asked Hamid.

"How old is the horse?" asked the stable keeper.

Hamid thought rapidly.

"Five."

The proprietor opened the mare's mouth and looked at her teeth.

"She is at least six," he declared.

He then loosened the girth and lifted up the saddle. There were no sores, nor any white patches of hair where sores had been. He pinched her rump, which was firm and well rounded. Then he removed the bridle, and looked at the bit. After this he picked at the stitching on the saddle.

"I will give you one hundred dollars Hassani," he said.

"That would not buy the trappings," replied Hamid, "in the Thursday market outside the walls."

"This is not the Thursday market," said the prospec-

tive purchaser with a shrewd look, "nor will you be waiting for it."

Time was passing, and Hamid tried to conceal his impatience.

"Give me two hundred," he demanded.

"One hundred and twenty-five," the stable keeper countered.

"One hundred and fifty," said Hamid.

"One hundred and thirty," was the reply.

"I will split the difference," said Hamid with a well simulated sigh.

"When the purchaser had counted out the money, Hamid left immediately. The stable keeper led the mare out an entrance in the rear, and took her to a smaller establishment, belonging to a friend. It would not do to keep the animal where it could easily be seen.

Outside the stable gate, Hamid paused to look at something in the nearby wall. It was a tangle of half a dozen white hairs, caught in a splinter of a protruding board. Hamid remembered that the mare's mane had hit this while he was leading her in.

Following a roundabout route, Hamid drew near the place where the Arab's wife was standing. He again kept a corner between himself and her, so that he could hear but not be seen. He had arrived just in time, for the Arab returned immediately.

He looked at his wife in perplexity.

"What have you done with the mare?" he demanded.

"I gave her to the man you sent," she answered tremulously.

"What man?" shouted the Arab. "I sent no man, you fool! Where did he take her?"

The Arab forgot the presence of the crowd, which was growing rapidly, and struck his wife twice with the flat of his hand. He seized her by the thick padding of cloth about her neck, and commenced shaking her.

"What she said is true," cried a vendor of candy, leaning far out of his shop, and making his voice heard above the noises of the crowd.

The Arab, realising suddenly how public was his demonstration, released his wife, who fell backwards and sat on the lowest step of the entrance to the mosque.

Turning to the candy-seller, he demanded: "Which way did the thief go?"

"Back there, to the right."

The Arab commenced running. When Hamid heard him coming, he retreated, so that by the time the Arab reached him, both of them were out of sight of the scattering mob. Hamid called out to the Arab, and touched his sleeve.

"Do not block me," said the other.

"Did you lose a grey mare," asked Hamid, "with a fine saddle and bridle?"

The Arab stopped abruptly, and turned around.

"Did you see where she was taken?" he panted.

"I did," replied Hamid.

"Then lead me there."

"I must have ten dollars' reward."

"You will be paid when I find the horse."

"Then you will not find it."

"I will give you five now, and five when I see it."

To this Hamid agreed. The Arab counted out five dollars in silver and handed them to Hamid, who led him into the street near the stable.

"It is near here," said Hamid. "Give me the other five and I will show you which door."

"When I have seen the horse," said the Arab.

Hamid walked over to the piece of board which projected from the wall, and looked at it carefully.

"What are you looking at?" asked the Arab.

"If you want proof that your mare is on this street, look here," said Hamid.

The Arab looked at the hairs.

"Those are from my horse," he said. "I could tell them anywhere."

"Very well," said Hamid. "Now you know that I have shown you the right street. There are many doors on this street, and if you go pounding on one after another, the thief will hear you and get the horse out through a back way before you can reach him. Give me the five dollars and I will show you the door."

The Arab cursed, but Hamid's reasoning was clear. The Arab handed him the money with reluctance, and Hamid put it in his scrip.

"Where is the door?" asked the Arab.

"That one," said Hamid, pointing with his thumb.

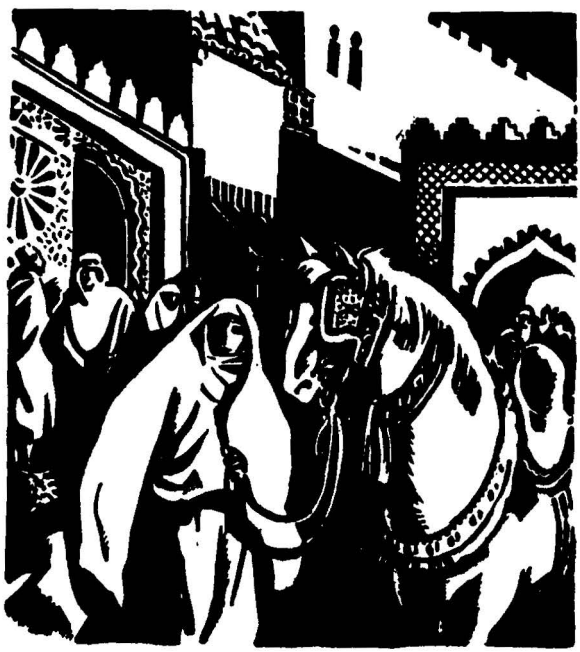
Hamid turned abruptly, and ran down a narrow alley, and thence into a wider thoroughfare where he lost himself in the crowd. He proceeded to the northern gate, passed through this, and travelled across country to el Hajeb. When he entered his house he found Moh Umzien, the ten year old son of his brother Mimun, seated in a corner, oiling a rifle.

"I borrowed your gun, uncle, to shoot pigeons with," said the boy. "I hope you do not mind," he added.

Hamid reached down into his scrip and drew forth a

handful of money. Having counted out ten dollars, he threw the coins into his nephew's lap.

"I too have been after pigeons," he said solemnly, "but to pluck, not to kill them. These are extra feathers which I did not deserve. Earn a few more like them, and you may have a rifle of your own. We are in the country of the Arabs."



CHAPTER XV

A SURPRISE ATTACK

For eight years the Ulad Abd el Mumen had worked diligently for the Arabs who employed them, and on the land which they themselves had bought with their earnings. They made no purchases of fine clothing, nor of other luxuries, but saved all their money, pooling it for the purchase of rifles and ammunition. In the fall of the tenth year, when the harvest was in and several weeks remained before the rains should commence, they spent all of their money on that for which they had saved it. Meanwhile they took care that Absalem the Tadmuti, who had come to live with them, did not go to Fez or any other place unaccompanied.

When all were armed with good repeating rifles and each man had several hundred cartridges in his bag and belt, they filled the space which remained in their scrips with dried rations—parched barley, dried meat, and raisins. Leaving the women and children in care of the old men, they set out in the night, making sure that Absalem would be watched by one of the older men. Absalem had not been told of their plans, but he was a fool if he had not guessed them.

They travelled only in the night, sleeping and keeping guard in the daytime in well hidden places; bleak glades on mountain sides, and high rock shelters. They built no fires, and ate sparingly of their rations. On the

fourth night they arrived at the mountain of Bayu and crossed it to the houses of their allies, the men of Teliwin, who sow their rye by the high springs. They of Teliwin gave them hearty welcome and after a few moments of speech girded their waists with their cartridge belts, those of them who had breech-loading rifles. The others filled their bags with powder and ball.

Half of the men, led by Mimun the son of the Malim Hamidu, took up positions on the mountain on the south side of the water of Iherrushen, overlooking the houses of Beni Tadmut. The other half, under his brother Hamid, crossed the Bayu where the defile was narrow and skirted the mountain between that stream and the Tighza, at length hiding themselves in the rocks high above the cantonal mosque of Tiddest, where they could shoot down on the village mosque across the river, and on the house of Bukkeish which stood near it. Notable among this party was Amar the Younger, the son of Amar the Scabhead. Unlike his father this lad was tall and bony, spare yet well muscled. He was blond like his uncle Ali the Yellowhaired, with glinting blue eyes sheltered by overhanging brows. Moh Umzien, the son of Mimun, amid tearful protests, had been left at home with the other children.

It was Thursday. On this day many people of the Vale of Iherrushen, and those of Ikhuanen as well, dress in good clothing and depart early for the market of Ikaroen. Those from the Iherrushen usually climb upstream to the pass and then down through Telmest into Iherrassen and thence to the market, while many of the Tiddest people climb the tortuous trail up the Tighza and over the Noisy Mountain. This route is shorter, but

the people who take mules and asses with them usually go up the Iherrushen and around the longer yet easier way.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen had done no fighting for a long time, and their spirits were high. Some of them, like Amar the Younger, were about to engage in their first attack. The Ulad Abd el Mumen hardly hoped to regain their land by this gesture, but were eager to make a great show of offence, and a considerable slaughter. When they saw the jagged walls of their houses moulding beneath them, and weeds growing through their floors, they were very angry. Each was looking at his own property and pointing out the decay to others. Mimun had difficulty silencing them. Some wanted to rush down at once and invest the houses of the Beni Tadmut, while others tried to discourage them.

At length people began coming out of the houses, leading mules with them.

"Don't fire," commanded Mimun in a loud whisper, "until I give the signal. Wait until there are many, for when we begin they will all rush back in again."

More and more people came out, women and children with the men. All were dressed in their finest, and busied themselves saddling and loading mules, capturing hens, and preparing loads for carrying. Some started up the trail.

"Let us fire now," a man whispered hoarsely, "before any of them get away."

Mimun gave the order. Two score rifles rang in a single volley, and a great cloud of white smoke rolled up from the side of the mountain. From then on the firing was irregular but constant, each man's rate de-

pending on his speed in loading. In their eagerness the men crept far out on the rocks.

The Beni Tadmut ran back into their houses, leaving twenty-odd men on the ground, some still and others writhing. Fortunately none of the women and children were hit by mistake. A counter attack began suddenly from windows, and four of the Ulad Abd el Mumen were hit at once. Two of them crawled back, one had to be hauled back by the feet, and the fourth lost his hold and pitched headlong down the shaly slope. His body turned sidewise and rolled until it struck the water with a loud splash. The man who was pulling his comrade in by the feet was hit in the face and collapsed.

Mimun received a ball in the right collarbone which glanced off, leaving the bone shattered. He scrunched his right shoulder up under his chin in pain, squinting and puckering his mouth, while cursing softly.

He turned his head up and glared at the others, shouting: "Fire away! Stop looking at me! Keep on!"

Si Alush the schoolmaster dragged Mimun into shelter and laid him on his back. For the second time now it was his task to care for this unruly warrior.

"Straighten out!" commanded Si Alush. "Don't hunch up your shoulder that way! Lie flat with both shoulders touching the ground!"

Si Alush took his walking stick, which he used as a gun-rest, and slid it under Mimun's shoulders. He then strapped each shoulder down to it with his turban. He cut two pieces of juniper from a clump growing in the crevice wherein they were lying, and pressed one on each side of the collarbone diagonally across from the top of the breastbone to the tip of the shoulder. He

continued pressing until he had the two halves of the collarbone in line between the sticks. Mimun winced, and emitted a groan.

Si Alush found it difficult to strap these sticks into place. He used three turbans, lashing under the armpit and over the shoulder, around the left side of the neck, and clear around the top part of Mimun's chest. The wound did not bleed much.

Si Alush kindled a small fire with the dry under-twigs of the juniper, and extracting a pair of pincers from his bag, heated one of the handles. He did not want to take the temper out of the jaws. When this was red he seared the wound with it, and the tart odour of burning skin mingled with the sweeter smell of juniper smoke. Mimun tried to hide his face in his left hand, but the tightness of the bandage would not permit this.

"Never mind," said Si Alush. "Try to hold still. No one else can see you."

By now there was no one left to shoot at, and the attackers, their first enthusiasm turned to caution, waited, well concealed, for further opportunities. A few shots rang out now and then from the houses, and were sporadically answered. High up in the mosque some one thrust a green flag out of the door. All shooting ceased.

"Let them come out," said Si Alush. "Don't shoot any of them."

"What is it?" asked Mimun from where he was lying.

"The students want to come out to pick up the dead and wounded."

"Let them come," said Mimun, spitting sidewise so as

to miss his face. "When they get the ground cleared we will cover it again."

After a few moments of waiting to see what would happen, a half dozen boys issued cautiously from the mosque. It took them many trips to carry all the dead and suffering into shelter. Meanwhile three of the Ulad Abd el Mumen climbed down to the water and retrieved their fellow. They dragged him up again, flopping and dripping. He had drowned. They unwound his turban, and wrung it out, and then spread it flat to put over him for a shroud.

Mimun moved over and they laid the corpses beside him.

"You will have to take these away before night," he said with a twisted smile, "or the jackals will eat me too."

Down at Tiddest a similar fight took place. The Ikhuanen lost twenty men, and the Ulad Abd el Mumen three. The latter held their position all day, and at night retreated, carrying their dead with them. Having forded the Bayu after dark, they rejoined their kinsmen.

Hamid knelt over his brother, who was sleeping fitfully. Mimun awoke with a start, and saw Hamid's face hovering over him dimly in the moonlight.

"Did you kill Bukkeish?" he asked.

"No, but we got one of his sons, and nineteen others. We thought that would do for the Ikhuanen. Our place is back here with you. If we should get separated it would fare badly with us."

"You were always a cautious fellow, Hamid," grumbled Mimun, "but this time there is sense in what you say. Our real quarrel is with the Beni Tadmut."

"I think it is time that we went back," said Hamid. "We have shot over forty of them, and lost seven. What more do we want? They won't come out of their houses again until after our rations are finished, and our ammunition too. You are on your back, and it will be hard enough to carry you home."

"I am on my back because Si Alush forces me to lie here," was the reply. "I will be as able to walk tomorrow as you are."

"Yes, but you won't be able to crawl, and duck down quickly. You will make a fine target. Come, let's get out."

"Nonsense," grunted Mimun, "we will stay until we are forced to leave."

"What of us?" asked one of the men of Teliwin. "If we go now they won't know that we were with you, but if we stay another day they will be sure to find out."

"What if they do?" retorted the prostrate Mimun. "They won't do anything about it. You are too hard to reach. You haven't enough property to coax them up there with. Go back if you like, we can do without you."

"That is a fine speech," cried the men of Teliwin. "That is gratitude for helping you out! Let's go home anyhow!"

"Don't listen to him," said Hamid, "he is out of his head. Let's take a vote."

Hamid and Si Alush and the more conservative men, as well as most of those from Teliwin, voted to go, but they were outnumbered by the younger men, especially by those who were seeing their first battle.

"You are the ones," cried Si Alush, addressing the lat-

ter, "who don't know how to fight. You have been reared on the flat lands around Fez. You are the very ones who will be killed first."

"Go back to your books!" cried one of Si Alush's erstwhile pupils. "Go home and write amulets for the women! We don't need you!"

"Silence!" roared Hamid, surprising all by his anger. "You must respect the most intelligent man here, or it will be the worse with you! Contact with Arabs has ruined your manners."

The argument continued much of the night, and some of the Teliwin men left. It was with difficulty that Hamidu and Si Alush could keep sentries posted.

In the first dim light of dawn these latter spied a long string of men creeping down from Tarosht, on the other side of the valley, almost out of range. The van of this line made a break and ran crouching for the houses of the Beni Tadmut. Five gained admittance and four were tumbled on the broken ground. At the same time shots came from the right, from some point on the very mountain on which the Ulad Abd el Mumen lay in ambush, and slightly above them.

"The Ikhuanen have followed us," cried Hamid, and some of the men turned and sought positions whence they could resist this new attack.

In doing so they were hit by the Beni Tadmut, who were shooting out of their houses. The rest of the Ulad Abd el Mumen concentrated their fire on the Tarosht men crawling on the other side, and caused those of the latter who could not find immediate shelter to scamper upward out of range. The few men of the Ulad Abd el Mumen who had flintlocks rammed double charges into

their long barrels and, bracing their shoulders against rocks, tried to hit where the breech-loaders could not follow. They found this painful to their shoulders and of no profit.

The rest of the day was spent by some of the Ulad Abd el Mumen in keeping the Beni Tadmut in their houses and preventing the Tarosht men from joining them, and by others in scrambling about among the rocks trying to outmanœuvre Bukkeish's followers. The red beard of the latter appeared for a moment around the side of a boulder, and his cheek was seared by a bullet.

When night fell there was no longer any question as to whether or not they should return. The losses had been heavy on both sides, for the attackers had ceased, during the last day, to hold the advantage. In all the casualties were as follows, as nearly as they could be computed: Ulad Abd el Mumen, thirty; Teliwin, two; Inhanahan (one man who had come with the Teliwin people), one; Tarosht, ten; Ikhuanen, twenty-eight; and Beni Tadmut, at least thirty. It was impossible to tell how many of the Beni Tadmut were dead because some had been hit through the windows of the houses.

All in all it had been profitable, thirty lost and at least seventy removed from the enemy. At the same time it was a tremendous slaughter, all in two days, and there was much grief over the deaths of relatives.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen went up to Teliwin and thence across the mountain between Ihershliyen and Temjunt, fording the headwater of the Wergha between Inhanahan and Mellal, and arriving at the waste of Beni

Krama in the Senhaja country before it was very light. After several days they arrived at el Hajeb.

It was a long time before Si Alush took the cane from Mimun's back. Even when he did, the bone set crookedly, and from that time on Mimun walked about with his right shoulder hunched.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BLACK GHOST

As has been previously related, the Mokaddem Ahadad was the warden of the cantonal mosque of all Iherrushen, up at Mukudem. This was an important mosque. In times of quiet between killings, the men from each village in the Vale of Iherrushen came on appointed days to pray, each village on its own day of the week. In it the learned preceptor of the Iherrushen taught those who had finished with their village schools, and wandering students as well; it was the preceptor who preached the Friday sermon in it; and in it met the members of the council, to chat, to jest, and to eat, as they had done that day, long ago, when Amar the Scabhead, the son of the Malim Hamidu, had served poisoned watermelon to Abd el Kadher the son of the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut.

Under the floor of the Mukudem mosque lay the bones of old Sidi Misaud, whom Abd el Mumen had met on the trail near Tighza's head, and whose presence infused the sanctuary with great holiness. Women who could bear no children came here, for the saint had a great reputation for causing fecundity. In the time with which we are concerned, the success of Sidi Misaud in this field was largely brought about by the Mokaddem Ahadad's habit of raising many hives of bees, and of storing in his house many large jars of purest honey. Women came

from all the Gzennaya to conceive, and from Beni Urriaghel and Beni Amart as well. The more distant the dwellings of their husbands, the greater were the chances of their success.

The Mokaddem Ahadad was a widower and lived alone, although the preceptor and his students had urged him to take another wife. To this request he invariably replied that he was too old to enjoy one, and that since he ate at the mosque there was no need.

It was his daily practice to enter the room occupied by the suppliant women, late in the afternoon. Here he would shake out the mats and sweep the floor. If any one of the women present attracted his fancy, he would casually mention to her that his house contained many jars of very sweet honey. Then he would turn to the subject of dogs, and what nuisances they were. Pursuing this topic, he would always end by declaring that his own dogs never barked at night, since there was no one who would think of robbing the warden of a mosque.

One afternoon such a conversation transpired. The woman was an Urriaghli, and had been married two years without issue, much to the disgust of her husband whom she feared would divorce her unless something should soon happen. The idea of honey delighted her.

That night when the other women were asleep she crept out and stole to the warden's house. The dogs, she observed with pleasure, merely wagged their tails at her approach. Old Ahadad had been watching for her, and the door was opened as soon as she reached it.

Inside, he sat her down on a soft rug and brewed her tea. This they drank sitting closely together, while the warden told her tales. When the tea was over he

brought out a pot of honey and two fresh loaves of barley bread. These he broke, and they dipped the pieces into the pot and ate. When the bread was finished, the woman dipped her fingers into the honey, and licked them. When the honey was finished, Ahadad blew out the candle, and made certain the blessing of the saint. After she had left he fell asleep, his broad face covered with a smile of satisfaction.

Several hours later he heard the sound of some one fumbling with the door. He sat up and stared wide-eyed, with his mouth open and incapable of sound, as a black hand with long nails, and a long black arm, strangely lighted from behind, groped around the door. The arm grew longer and a shoulder appeared, shrouded in white; and after it a hideous black face with staring eyes.

The Mokaddem Ahadad clutched his belly in horror. The tips of his flabby nipples stiffened and tingled. There was a knife-scar across the face, and the base of the nose was tilted downward. The apparition's chin was long and protruded forward. This was like the description of the Saint Misaud, over whose remains the shrine had been erected. But Misaud had not been black. The Mokaddem Ahadad could not explain it. He stared as if hypnotised, and the skin on his neck became gooseflesh.

"Are you the Mokaddem Ahadad, the warden of my mosque?" the vision boomed in a sepulchral voice.

"I am," the warden piped weakly.

"For years you have desecrated my burial place," the black ghost went on, "acting scandalously with women who seek my aid, and brewing a great stench of shame in

Mukudem and in all the Rif. You will pay for it with this!"

The apparition stepped completely into the room, and in his right hand, which had been concealed, brandished a long iron rod with two glowing red prongs. Ahadad shrieked with horror as the vision approached, but could not move. The prongs grew nearer and nearer, until they shimmered before his eyes, and with a thrust the ghost pressed them into his eyeballs. Everything went bright and then grew dark. A frightful pain shot through Ahadad's head. He found his voice, and began screaming horribly.

All the dogs up and down the Vale of Iherrushen started barking, including his own, which dashed from their refuse-pile and commenced clawing the door. Soon the students from the mosque burst in carrying candles, and found him writhing on the floor, holding his hands to his eyes.

The preceptor followed, and leaned over him.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

The Mokaddem Ahadad slobbered out his story. The preceptor, pulling the stricken man's hands away from his face, looked at his eyes. They were intact, but wide open and staring.

"Stand up!" he ordered.

The Mokaddem Ahadad tried to arise, but lost his balance and crashed to the floor.

"He has gone blind," said the preceptor to his students.

"It is for my sins," cried the warden. "I have sinned greatly! I have lain with hundreds of women in this

very room! I have sinned! I have sinned against the saint and against God, and against His religion!"

"Silence!" shouted the preceptor.

"Boys, do not listen to him," he said to his students. "Bind his mouth, lest the villagers hear these things. None of you must repeat them. Our mosque is a good one, and we must not let its fine reputation be ruined."

PART TWO

THE OGRESS CRUMBLES

and drilling. On the whole, however, it made little difference to the exiled Riffians whether they paid taxes to a foreign sultan or to foreign Christians; and when the younger of them had the money to spare, they would ride around the city in high, shambling motor-trucks, clutching the sides in ecstatic joy, and looking at one another with smiles of satisfaction.

Mimun had been quietly watching the progress of events in the Rif. He spoke often with travellers, and at times entertained visitors in his house, even some of his erstwhile enemies. It had been a long time now since the Ulad Abd el Mumen had made their surprise attack, and longer still since they had climbed out of their valley into exile.

With these thoughts in mind, Mimun selected a number of sheep, among them a fat ram, and a herd of goats. Cows, too, he chose, and he loaded ploughs and other tools upon mules. A half dozen of the younger men, including his son Moh Umzien, went with him, and a score of grey-bearded veterans. Only the most persistent of the women were in the procession, since it would be better to see how things were faring before the others were brought. Somehow the word was passed to Si Alush in the Beni Urriaghel, and he too prepared to reinstall himself in the house of his birth.

Seven mornings later, those of the Ulad Abd el Mumen who had dared, stood quietly in the ruins of the Malim Hamidu's proud fortress at the confluence of the Bayu and the Iherrushen. No one had opposed their passage, and some were openly weeping at the desolation which surrounded them. Moh Umzien ran about eagerly inspecting the walls, to see which were sound enough

to be restored, and which needed to be pulled down and entirely rebuilt. He looked long at the shale slope above, choosing building material.

At length Si Alush rounded the bend of the Tlat, down from over the mountain, and he and Mimun bowed and kissed each other on either temple. He gave the donkey which he was leading to a boy, and took charge of Mimun's fat ram. Down the waters of Bayu they marched in solemn procession, with little speech. Arriving at length at the pebbly place where the waters of Tighza join into the mightier stream, they forded, and climbed the bank to the mosque in front of Bukkeish's house.

Si Alush strode ahead, and grasping the ram by its forelegs, bent its head up with his free hand. Holding the ram's muzzle uptilted against his cheek, he sawed away at its throat, incanting: "There is no god but The God, God is Most Great!"

Blood spurted out and stained the planks of the door. This opened, and Bukkeish walked out slowly.

"We will have to call a council," he said.

"We have made a great shame-compulsion," said Si Alush, "and you cannot refuse us. We will build up our houses and clear our terraces, rebuilding the walls that have fallen and carrying the soil back to its place. We will care for our vines and water our trees, and live at peace with our neighbours."

The council met. Its members came from all the valleys and passes of the Gzennaya, and met under the olive trees across from the mosque. Councillors argued and cursed, and Si Alush pleaded. The earnest demeanour of the younger of the returning exiles carried more

and drilling. On the whole, however, it made little difference to the exiled Riffians whether they paid taxes to a foreign sultan or to foreign Christians; and when the younger of them had the money to spare, they would ride around the city in high, shambling motor-trucks, clutching the sides in ecstatic joy, and looking at one another with smiles of satisfaction.

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Seven mornings later, those of the Ulad Abd el Mumen who had dared, stood quietly in the ruins of the Malim Hamidu's proud fortress at the confluence of the Bayu and the Iherrushen. No one had opposed their passage, and some were openly weeping at the desolation which surrounded them. Moh Umzien ran about eagerly inspecting the walls, to see which were sound enough

to be restored, and which needed to be pulled down and entirely rebuilt. He looked long at the shale slope above, choosing building material.

At length Si Alush rounded the bend of the Tlat, down from over the mountain, and he and Mimun bowed and kissed each other on either temple. He gave the donkey which he was leading to a boy, and took charge of Mimun's fat ram. Down the waters of Bayu they marched in solemn procession, with little speech. Arriving at length at the pebbly place where the waters of Tighza join into the mightier stream, they forded, and climbed the bank to the mosque in front of Bukkeish's house.

Si Alush strode ahead, and grasping the ram by its forelegs, bent its head up with his free hand. Holding the ram's muzzle uptilted against his cheek, he sawed away at its throat, incanting: "There is no god but The God, God is Most Great!"

Blood spurted out and stained the planks of the door. This opened, and Bukkeish walked out slowly.

"We will have to call a council," he said.

"We have made a great shame-compulsion," said Si Alush, "and you cannot refuse us. We will build up our houses and clear our terraces, rebuilding the walls that have fallen and carrying the soil back to its place. We will care for our vines and water our trees, and live at peace with our neighbours."

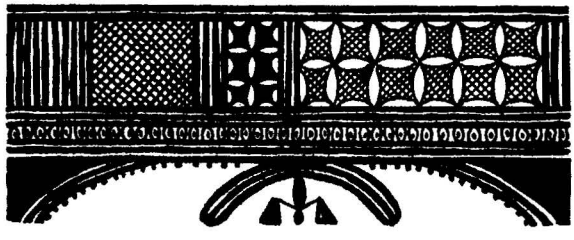
The council met. Its members came from all the valleys and passes of the Gzennaya, and met under the olive trees across from the mosque. Councillors argued and cursed, and Si Alush pleaded. The earnest demeanour of the younger of the returning exiles carried more

weight than all the entreaties of their elders. Mimun, too proud to grovel, said little.

After a whole day spent in controversy it was decided that they might remain, but sacred oaths must be said, and therefore the whole body repaired to the mosque at Mukudem. Here the Ulad Abd el Mumen linked hands with their judges across the relics of the holy Misaud, and many pious declarations were muttered.

For weeks the work of wall-building, of hewing beams on the mountain, where the tree line had receded, of setting up frames, and of sodding roofs, went on. Then came the business of rebuilding the terrace and of recarving the irrigation ditches, until once more the water flowed, once more the earth was ready for ploughing, and there was shelter in which to sleep the sound slumber of physical exhaustion.

When all this had been done old Mimun went back to Fez alone. He had finished his work; he had realised his dream. He had left a son behind him to carry on in the path of his ancestors. For the sake of this son's peace and success, it would be better if Mimun himself were not present.



CHAPTER XVIII

BOARHIDE BUSKINS

After Mimun the son of the Malim Hamidu had left his son Moh Umzien behind him in the Vale of Iherrushen, the season passed without violence. At this time Moh Umzien was at that transitional stage of boyhood between goat-herding and farming, which latter is properly the task of men. Like all Riffian children, he had helped with grape-picking and harvesting since he was very small, but he was just beginning to plough and to perform the other adult tasks of cultivation. At the same time, he was not too old for tending goats, and when there was nothing else to do he helped the younger boys on the mountain, substituting for them whenever possible so that they might go to school and learn, under Si Alush's tutelage, to read and write, and to recite the Koran.

In the winter time, when men sit in their houses whittling shafts and handles for their tools, adzing out new ploughs, and repairing windows and shutters, the boys often drive the goats half-way up the mountain to forage in the bare patches of grass which the wind has cleared of snow. In this season the Riffians wrap woollen rags about their feet, and then step on squares of rawhide which they draw up around their toes and ankles, and lace through holes in the edges. These buskins, with

the hair turned out, are comfortable except on sharp stones, where sandals, worn in summer, are better.

Moh Umzien was wearing an old pair of buskins made of cowhide, and they were almost worn out. There were holes in each buskin under the balls of his feet, and through these holes the rags in which his feet were wrapped kept working out and dragging. Moh Umzien wished very much to shoot a wild boar so that he might make new buskins from its skin. Consequently, as he sat on a rock half-way up the mountain, he was thinking more of boar than of his goats, which were walking about nervously in a small, snowless area, nibbling at withered weeds and biting at juniper bushes and scrub live oak.

Now and then a goat would rise up on its hind legs and wedge its forefeet in the branches of a bush, so that it might browse higher. Others at times would pause from their feeding and lift their noses in the air, their beards waving in the wind, to sniff. Something was abroad; the goats knew it, and Moh Umzien knew it from the goats. He balanced the single-shot breech-loader, which his father had left with him, in his hand, and looked down at the weapon lovingly. The metal chilled his fingers, so he shifted the rifle to the other hand and blew on them.

Leaving the goats for a moment, he commenced a short tour of exploration, climbing higher until he came to a snow-covered trail leading eastward toward Bukkeish's house of Afussa, that house which Moh Umzien's great-grandfather Moh had built, and which his grandfather the Malim Hamidu had failed to inherit.

On the trail Moh Umzien saw many prints of cloven

hoofs, too broad for goats and too small for cows, and pressed in deeply as by a great bodily weight. These he knew to be boar tracks, and the boar had been travelling east. He stooped down to feel of a yellow streak in the snow. While not warm, the urine had not yet completely frozen.

Casting a glance backwards at his goats, Moh Umzien commenced running down the trail. He had not gone far when he heard a loud shot, as of a flintlock rifle. Suddenly he saw a herd of wild boar hastening toward him, fleeing back over their own tracks. The wind was blowing east, and they did not smell him. They loomed large as he watched them in fascination; their high shoulders and bristly manes, their slobbery lips and great curving tusks, looked most formidable as they rushed on at him.

Moh Umzien stepped aside from the path and knelt to take aim. When he had sighted the chest of a huge male, he fired. The slug struck its shoulder, but did not penetrate to the organs. The boar, wounded, emitted a grunt, and looked about him. Moh Umzien had no time to reload, although he attempted to. The boar made a mad rush at the boy, and before Moh Umzien could step aside, had tusked him in both shins. Moh Umzien felt a twinge of pain shoot up his legs, and fell over backwards, staining the snow with blood. As he turned and rested on his hands and knees, the boar likewise turned, and again rushed him.

At this point the author of the earlier shot, he who had turned the herd in its tracks, appeared. It was another boy, similarly dressed and of similar occupation. He drew his knife and ran in front of Moh Umzien.

When the boar charged, he stabbed it under the tusks, ramming the blade into the animal's heart, and twisted it. In doing this his upper arm was badly slashed, and he pulled it away quickly, leaving the knife in the wound. The boar fell forward and rolled on its side, wheezing loudly. Moh Umzien, crawling over to it, drew out the knife and plunged it into the boar's side again and again. He then looked up at the boy who had rescued him.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Shaib, I come from Tiddest."

"My name is Moh Umzien, of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. You were very brave to jump in and stab the boar. It was a fine thing, and I will never forget it. I will do a thing like that for you some day."

"I couldn't help it," replied Shaib. "I couldn't let you be killed."

"You are my friend from this day on," declared Moh Umzien, "and my brother. I will swear it over Sidi Misaud with you."

"And you are my brother," said Shaib. "Our families may fight, but you and I will not go to battle against each other."

Shaib dragged the carcass downward, while Moh Umzien crawled through the snow on his hands and knees. The goats marched before them.

"Let me carry you," said Shaib, "and I can come back for this boar later."

Moh Umzien replied, "Never. I would rather crawl like this than lose my new pair of buskins, for the jackals might get it. There is plenty of hide on this beast; we can each have a new pair!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE CAVE UNDER THE OGRESS

Si Alush the schoolmaster stitched and bound Moh Umzien's lacerated legs and Shaib's biceps. The cold weather was good for healing, since no disease was abroad.

It is on account of this that the Riffians have their children circumcised in winter, when there is little likelihood of infection. In a week Moh Umzien was able to walk again, and in a month only the long scars on his legs reminded him of his misadventure.

When spring came, Moh Umzien set about the manly tasks of farming, and toiling from sunrise to sunset at the plough and at sowing, fell into a dreamless sleep each night after supper. It was much better up here in the mountains, on one's own land and in the home of one's people, than down in the village outside Fez where one was close to Arabs and Jews and Christians, and where the land was flat and uninviting.

Moh Umzien was pleased that he had come back to the valley of which he preserved but a faint and terrifying memory, of that day when his grandfather the Malim Hamidu and his uncle Amar the Scabhead had been massacred. Particularly did he remember that night in the house of Haddu, his other grandfather, when the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut had wanted to do away with him. He had little use for the Beni Tad-

mut, but Haddu came often to visit him and was very kind to him.

When the spring warmed into summer, and there was less work to be done, and the sun set later in the evening, Moh Umzien often went to Tiddest after supper to sit about with Shaib, his sworn brother, and with other friends, telling tales and joking. Moh Umzien was often called upon to talk about Fez, the Arabs, and the Christians. The boys of his own age at Tiddest soon made friends with him, but old Bukkeish would not greet him for months, and then only with a surly nod.

One afternoon when the boys at Tiddest were sitting under the olive trees eating almonds, an old man was regaling them with a tale.

"It was in the time of my father," he enunciated slowly, "that a Soussi came into the valley. He was a dark-skinned man, and wily. My brother had met him in Marrakesh, which is far beyond Fez, or so they tell. This Soussi was a great magician. He could spill a pool of ink in the palm of your hand and trace writing in it with a stick, and you would look in it and see a great procession of jinns marching by, with tall turbans and black faces, and long slobbering lips. There were she-jinns too, and their breasts were so long that they trailed the ground and squirted milk at each step. Then you could see warriors riding by on chargers, waving swords. Finally the ink would turn black again, and you would wink and wonder at what you had seen. I saw it myself and hence I know.

"The Soussi had a box with him, a heavy box of cedar wood, filled with gold coins as broad as a plate. He carried this box in one panier on the back of a strong

mule, and filled the other panier with stones to balance it. It was a heavy load for the mule, but he fed the beast every day on barley, and it was strong. He showed my brother what was in the box, and said he had dug it from the ruins of an old sultan's palace, down in the country of the Draa, which lies in the Sahara, a land filled with gravel and sand, and there is no water in it, nor any spear of grass.

"All the men of Tiddest soon knew of the box and what it contained, but no one molested the Soussi, for all knew that he was enchanted. He talked of it only with my brother. The Soussi wished to hide it, and to go back to his own country on some business of his own which he was bound to perform. Then he would return and fetch it, and would divide the gold with my brother. My brother told him that the best place to hide it would be in the Rock of the Ogress, across the valley."

The boys looked up at the rock which stood like a gate past which the combined waters of Iherrushen, Bayu, and Tighza rushed northward to become the Nekor, and trickle out in irrigation ditches in the flat country of the sea-lying Beni Urriaghel. This was one gate, and a sharp peak was the other. The Rock of the Ogress was knobbed on top, and the knob looked like an old woman's head, snub-nosed in profile, and bent. It fell sheer from her chin to the water, and behind this it rolled in undulations to form a burden-laden back.

"There is a cave under the Rock of the Ogress," continued the old man, "as you well know. In that cave there is a tunnel, and then a sheer drop, then another tunnel, then a second drop, and then a third tunnel. My brother and the Soussi took the box there by night,

and carried it to the end of the third tunnel, where it terminated at the side of an underground stream. The bottom is soft and earthy there, and moist. My brother and the Soussi dug a hole and lowered the box into it, and covered it with earth. Then the Soussi made a great charm over it, and called out of the stream a jinn in the form of a wolf with green eyes, blazing in the dark. The jinn was to sit there on guard until the Soussi should return. Any one who should look at its eyes would die.

"My brother waited two years, and the Soussi did not return. Finally my brother reasoned that the Soussi was dead, and that he would have the treasure for himself, so he went into the cave, and climbed down the two drops, and came to the stream. He had hardly commenced digging when the jinn leaped at him, its eyes blazing.

"My brother turned and ran, and his candle went out. He scrambled out of the hole and his eyes were wide and staring. He took ill. Then he went to Fez, so that he might forget what he had seen, and in seven days he died."

"Let's go into the cave and find out whether or not this is true," cried Shaib.

"It is true," said the old man. "Do you think I would be sitting here telling you lies? And if you go, the one who enters first will die."

"Maybe the jinn is old now," suggested Moh Umzien with a wink. "Maybe his eyes have quit glowing; in fact, he may even be dead."

"The jinns do not die," the old man said fervently.

The boys argued with each other and made plans. All finally backed out but three, Shaib, Moh Umzien, and

one Aissa of Tiddest, a stocky, agile youth, with a round shiny face and a short pigtail.

The three crossed the river and climbed up back of the mosque to the ridge which leads onto the Ogress's back. In a crevice of the rock they saw an open passage gaping black before them. Others who had followed watched the three step carefully down, each holding a candle in one hand.

Aissa commenced shouting: "God ward off devils and Satan himself! God ward off devils and Satan himself!"

Moh Umzien scraped the back of his knife against the rock with each step, for jinns were created in the days before men had iron, and they flee at the sound of the abhorrent metal. Shaib joined Aissa in his magical imprecation. At length they reached the first drop, a sheer lightless hole, little wider than a man's body.

"You stay here and hold your turban for us to climb down," said Moh Umzien to Aissa, "for you are the youngest."

"What if I am?" shouted the latter. "I am the nimblest as well."

"The only way to settle it," said Shaib, "is to draw lots."

In anticipation of this dispute he had brought three twigs with him, of unequal lengths. Turning his back, he arranged these in his closed fist so that all three protruded equally.

"The longest stays here," he said, "the middle one stays at the second drop, and the shortest goes to the bottom."

Aissa drew the shortest, with a cry of glee; Moh Umzien the middle one, and Shaib was left holding the longest. Shaib unwound his turban, which was a long one

and made of strong, white cotton. He knotted this every two feet, and tied one end to his waist. Setting his candle in a crevice above him, he braced himself over the pit. His shadow wavered long-legged over the sides and bottom of the hole. Aissa climbed down, and then Moh Umzien. These two went on as they had come, leaving Shaib clicking his knife on stone.

"You had better let me go furthest after all," said Moh Umzien.

"Don't be foolish," replied Aissa in some heat. "I drew the shortest and I am going."

When they arrived at the second drop, Moh Umzien did with his turban as Shaib had done, and as Aissa was about to descend, he handed the latter his knife.

"You will need it more than I will," he said.

Moh Umzien watched the light from Aissa's candle grow dimmer and dimmer and finally die. The shouts lasted longer than the light. It seemed hours to Moh Umzien as he remained there, braced over the hole. A bat flew up noisily and hit him in the face with its wing. Moh Umzien almost lost his balance dodging it.

After what seemed a still more interminable time, he heard faint shouts coming up the passage. These shouts grew rapidly louder, and frenzied and incoherent. Suddenly Aissa appeared at the bottom of the hole, his oily face casting great drops of sweat, and his eyes round and frantic.

"I saw the jinn!" he shrieked. "I saw the jinn! He is after me!"

He scrambled up the turban and before Moh Umzien knew what was happening Aissa had knocked him down and brushed out his candle, and had raced past him up

the darkness of the second passage. Moh Umzien fell into the pit but hooked his elbows over the edge. Drawing himself up as quickly as possible, he felt his way back.

Finally he reached a wall and feeling, found himself at the bottom of the first pit. There was no light, and no sign of Shaib. Feeling about on the floor he found Shaib's turban piled in a heap. Moh Umzien now became infected by the general fright. He listened carefully, huddled against the wall. The silence was terrific. Suddenly he heard a loud slap, and cringed. Another bat hit him, and in spite of himself he let out a short cry.

Finally he saw a faint glow stretch out on the floor ahead of him. He looked up; some one was coming with a candle. Soon he heard Shaib's shouting, and saw the latter's anxious face peering down at him.

"The sow!" shouted Shaib, "he pulled my turban down, for I had untied it to loosen it. It was hurting my waist. He knocked my candle down, too. I had to get another turban and another candle."

Moh Umzien drew himself up while this explanation was in progress. When they reached the mouth of the cave they found no one, and from the ridge saw a crowd collected under the olive trees, with Aissa in the centre, moaning and gesticulating. Some of the older men were there, among them Bukkeish.

When the two boys reached the crowd, Aissa had for the tenth time begun his narrative.

"I went down to where the stream is; it was a long way. There were bats flapping about, making a horrid sound, like hens clucking. Some of them hit me, and others flew back the way I had come. The water flowed

softly, but with a lapping noise, and the light from my candle shone on it. The dirt was loose, and I leaned over to scoop it up. Suddenly I felt something looking at me, and I started to straighten up. There in the water I saw two lights, shining green at me. They were the jinn's eyes, so I turned around and ran. As I did so a wolf jumped out of the water after me, but he didn't catch me. I heard him following for a way, and then he must have stopped."

Shaib laughed. "You saw the reflection of your candle, that's what you saw."

"It was not!" cried Aissa. "I saw his ears too when he jumped out, and his teeth. I saw him, I saw his eyes! I know now that I am going to die!"

Bukkeish turned angrily at Moh Umzien and Shaib.

"It is that grandson of the Malim Hamidu, that is what it is. He comes down here to frighten our boys with his sorcery. His grandfather was a conjurer in secret."

Every one looked at Moh Umzien.

"That is not true!" cried Shaib.

"Be still!" shouted Bukkeish. "And you, you young whelp, go home!"

Moh Umzien was outnumbered, and he had no gun. He turned quietly and forded the Tighza, holding his skirts high over his thighs.

CHAPTER XX

MAD ABSALEM

Those of the Ulad Abd el Mumen who had returned from exile to the Vale of Iherrushen had occupied their land for a year and a half without having anything of consequence happen. There had been peace in the valley; no shootings, no real disputes, and but few harsh words. It was as if a new era of quiet had entered this tempestuous corner of the Rif unawares.

Absalem the Tadmuti, down at el Hajeb, felt the yearning for home which had lured some of his neighbours back. He had talked with several of his kinsmen, and they had not mentioned the death of Mohend the Freckled, who had been shot in front of his mistress's door in Tarosht the morning that Absalem had left the Rif.

Not knowing whether or not he had been accused of this murder, Absalem began to think that perhaps all had been smoothed over and he might safely return. Consequently he went back toward the end of summer, thinking to repair the house which had lain empty since his mother's death, then to go down to Fez for the harvest, and when that was finished to return with his wife and two children for permanent settlement in the Vale of Iherrushen.

He found the roof of his house fallen in. No one molested him, though few spoke to him in a very

friendly manner. Still, he had not been shot on sight, and if he were quiet and friendly, and attentive to prayer, he could probably work his way back into his neighbours' esteem.

Since the roof was in such bad condition, with the clay tumbled over the floor and the ridgepole riddled with wormholes, he ripped it down entirely, cleared out the debris, and started anew, with a green ridgepole hewn from near the top of the crest, where but a few suitable trees were left. On the day of the ridgepole feast, few people came to help him with the goat and to celebrate; but among them was Ali the Pot-head, so called because of the roundness of his skull, which bulged in the forehead and to either side. He was the brother of Mohend the Freckled, whom Absalem had so long ago slain.

At the same time one of the dogs of Haddu, the grandfather of Moh Umzien, was beginning to slobber white froth, and to bark and run about crazily. It had been a summer of surpassing heat, and none of the dogs were in good fettle. Haddu had noticed this, and was waiting a few days to see if the dog would not get better before killing it. Haddu had mentioned it to nobody, but Ali the Pot-head had seen it.

The next day was Thursday, and Haddu and all his family, as well as many others of the Beni Tadmut, had left early for the market of Ikaroen. Consequently Ali the Pot-head did not go, but sat all morning in a back room of his house fashioning a muzzle from the hide of a wild boar. After he had finished this he put it under his arm and went outdoors.

It was late afternoon, but no one had yet returned. He approached Haddu's house, skulking behind trees and

crawling across open spaces. He crouched a few feet from the dogs and watched the one which was not well. It lay on its forepaws, growling. Ali cast a looped rope over it, and pulled it taut about its neck. Running up to it, he held its face down with one foot, and slipped the muzzle over its nose, strapping it tight behind the ears with a long thong. The other dogs barked and nipped at his legs, but he disregarded them and worked fast. When he had fitted and fastened the muzzle, he picked the writhing dog up from the ground and ran for a gully, up which he climbed quickly, crouching so as not to be seen.

When he arrived at the top of the mountain Ali the Pot-head ran along just under the ridge, until he came to a clump of cedar. This was a dense jumble of wilderness, so thick that it could not be penetrated by the eye. In the middle of it he tied the dog to the trunk of a thick bush. Two nights later he went up to give the dog water, which it lapped eagerly when its muzzle was loosened. As soon as it had finished, it rolled on its back and its mouth foamed soapily. It commenced barking as best it could. Ali the Pot-head made it fast and again left it.

He kept track of the progress of Absalem's roof. Two days later when Ali the Pot-head was coming home from cutting early maize in a terrace, he saw that the roof had been raftered, and poles laid over most of the rafters, except for the lower portion of one side.

That night Ali the Pot-head again climbed the mountain, and this time brought the dog back with him, under his arm. The animal was hard to carry because now it was completely mad, and it squirmed mightily.

Since Ali the Pot-head's hand had been scratched by the brush in the thicket, he was careful not to touch any of the froth.

He crept slowly toward Absalem's house, and when some distance above it, knelt behind a rock to finish his preparations. He slit the top of the muzzle with one hand, while holding the sides of it together with the other; then he pierced a hole through each side with the point of his knife, and passed a leather lace through both. Having tied this lace with a looped knot, so that it would come apart when he should pull the end, he removed the rope from the dog's neck and fastened it securely to a slit in the muzzle. He then clutched the beast under one arm, and held the rope and the end of the thong in the other hand.

Having crept up to Absalem's house, he paused to peer in over the edge of the wall through the open space. Absalem was sleeping soundly in an opposite corner, curled up in a blanket, with one hand under his head. Ali the Pot-head threw the dog in, pulled the lace and hauled the muzzle back with the rope, and fled. He paused on his way home to cast these objects into a bush.

A great tumult arose from the partly finished house. Human shrieks and wild staccato barkings welled forth, until the barkings died and the shrieks changed to dolorous shouts. Armed neighbours came running, and Ali the Pot-head carefully avoided them on his way home. The neighbours, bursting through the door, could see nothing but a patch of moonlight shining through the unfinished gap in the room and lighting a bare rectangle of floor. Some one lighted a candle, and there was Absalem, grasping a knife in one bloody hand, while with

the other he wiped streaks of blood from his lacerated throat. On the ground in front of him lay Haddu's dog, its eyes still open and its head covered with blood and foam. Numerous knife wounds all over its body were slowly oozing.

"That is my dog," said Haddu. "I have not seen it for several days."

"Your dog!" cried Absalem. "It is more a jinn than a dog! How did it get in here with the door closed? It couldn't leap the wall."

"It was mad," pronounced a neighbour, prodding the carcass with the end of a stick. "Look at the froth on its mouth!"

Absalem remained two days longer, and quickly finished the work on his roof. He did not clay it well, but covered it with a thin layer. He could not sleep at night, and would have spoken to no one; but no one appeared. He knew what it was to go mad from the bite of a dog. In the Rif they tie a madman in a corner of the house, and when he becomes too violent, wall him in. If his suffering is too anguished, his relatives pour cold water over the top of the wall onto his fevered head, and this often puts him out of his suffering.

Absalem went through this cycle in his mind, a hundred times. He could envision his cousins fastening his wrists while he tried to bite them. He could hear the thud of stones being lifted to the top of a growing wall, and could smell the damp odour of mortar. He could feel the splash of icy water on his steaming head.

He must get out of here quickly. On the other hand, the rest of the Beni Tadmut would not wish him to remain; they would prefer him to go mad in Fez, and bite

some of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. As for that, he imagined their thoughts, and determined at length to see a French doctor in the city. Perhaps there was something in it after all, this Christian sorcery. The Frenchman could stick a needle in him, or cut him open, or give him something evil-tasting to drink, and the evil spirit which had entered him through the foam of the dog would be expelled. Thus he might after all be saved.

At the dawn of the third day he had decided on the French doctor, and left feverishly, abandoning his belongings. He ran all day up the trail, and slept at night, exhausted, under a bush. He could hear the footsteps of his cousins padding after him as he lay. They had ropes in their hands.

The second day of his flight, which was the fourth day after he had been bitten, he ran like a madman. He had left the Gzennaya and was passing through an open glade of cork trees, with sandy soil underfoot. A rabbit, startled at the apparition, hopped aside with its ears flattened behind it. Absalem had lost his trail, but he was running toward the setting sun, and a little to the left of it. This, he thought, was the right direction.

At length he came to a down slope, and saw a village below him, huddled in a grove of fir. The houses were high and their cork-covered roofs sharply peaked. A man with a long beard was standing on the platform in front of the mosque, rendering the call to prayer. The words came very faintly to Absalem as he stumbled onward.

Looking ahead at the village, he failed for a moment to see what was underfoot. His left foot sank in a jackal's earth as far as the ankle, and he fell forward on

his face. As he sat up, a sharp pain streaked through his ankle. Attempting to stand up, he again fell. He crawled downward toward the village, and reached the mosque after twilight had begun.

From the door of the mosque floated the music of flutes, and the sound of falsetto song. Crawling in, Absalem saw a company of musicians, some playing flutes and others, younger, swaying ecstatically from their waists as they sang. The flute-players saw him first, and as they stopped the singers looked around.

"What place is this?" gasped Absalem in Arabic.

"Beni Krama," the musicians replied. "What is wrong with you?"

"I have fallen and injured my ankle. It may be sprained, but I think it is broken. Do not fail to provide for a guest of God."

"We will fetch the preceptor," said a boy, "and he will see what is wrong with you. If your ankle is broken, he will set it."

The students lifted Absalem under the armpits and sat him down on a mat with his back to the wall. One of them brought a basin of water, and they bathed his face and arms. Soon the preceptor entered, he whom Absalem had seen issuing the call to prayer an hour earlier.

Lifting the injured leg tenderly, the old man laid it on his lap, and commenced feeling. When he touched the swollen place, Absalem let out a cry of pain.

"Quiet, please," said the old man gently. "It will hurt a little, but I will fix it."

Giving the foot a twist which brought forth a still

louder cry, the preceptor looked at his students and said: "The bone is broken."

"But I must get to Fez!" cried Absalem. "I cannot wait for it to mend! It is a matter of death!"

"Why are you in so great a hurry?" asked the preceptor, as he washed the ankle in preparation for splinting.

Absalem could not think of a plausible reason for some time.

Finally he said: "News has come that my father is dying, and I must be there to help bury him."

This statement was not said in a convincing manner.

"Many a man has been laid in the earth with no son to pile it upon him," said the preceptor, "and his chances in Paradise are in no way diminished."

"I have not seen him for many years," replied Absalem with less hesitancy, "and he sent for me especially."

"There is no way to go," replied the preceptor, "until your bone has knit, and that will take at least two weeks."

"Two weeks?" cried Absalem, with an expression of horror. "I cannot wait two weeks! If I wait two weeks, it will be too late! Everything will be ruined!"

"How will things be ruined if you arrive two weeks after your father's death?" asked the preceptor.

Absalem shivered, and shouted out: "My cousins are running after me with ropes in their hands! I can hear their feet tramping! Don't let them in!"

The preceptor looked knowingly at his students, and tapped his head. Absalem controlled himself too late, and realised what he had done.

"No, no!" he cried, "I was talking foolishness; there

is no one coming. I fell down and the sun affected my head. It is very hot."

"Then don't try to talk any more," said the preceptor. "Sleep to-night and we will see in the morning what can be done."

The idea of delaying his journey for a night terrified Absalem.

"No, no!" he shrieked, again losing control. "Have you no mules, no horses, not even a donkey? Order a man to saddle up, and sling me over the pack! I cannot lose a night! It will be too late!"

Four students carried Absalem, writhing and kicking, into an empty house. They tied his hands behind him and barred the door from the outside.

In the morning the door was opened, and a jug of milk set on the sleeping platform, where he could drink from a low spout without needing his hands. A halved loaf of bread was set beside it.

"I was telling you lies last night," said Absalem craftily. "That is not true about my father. What I am really worried about is my wife. I have heard that she is acting scandalously every night. I must get back to stop it and punish her and her lover. I will kill him, and I will cut off his genitals and put them in his mouth! Let me out, give me a mule, so that I can kill him! And I will rip my wife's belly to the navel with a knife!"

"You will have to wait until the sheikh gets here," answered one of the students. "It is his place to decide."

After several hours, the door again opened, and a fat man in a snowy white jellaba stood well back from the threshold. Four retainers with rifles aimed from the waist stood in front of him.

"So this is the man!" said the sheikh, raising a pudgy hand to his mouth in disgust.

"It is he," replied the preceptor, who was standing behind him.

"What ails him?" asked the sheikh.

"I must get to Fez!" shouted Absalem. "My neighbours are stealing my property! They are cutting down my olive trees! I must get to Fez before they ruin everything!"

"That is the third story he has told so far," said one of the students, he who had brought the milk and the bread.

"Mad as a hyæna," said the sheikh.

"What shall we do with him?" asked one of the guards.

"Leave him confined to see if he will get better," was the decision.

At this Absalem set up a loud wail, and began crawling across the floor. The door was slammed in his face and again barred.

After four days there was no doubt that Absalem was completely mad. On the tenth day of his confinement, the guard who came in to feed him noticed that his eyes rolled wildly, and saw flecks of froth on his lips. Absalem lunged at him as he drew back, snapping his jaws and trying to bite him. The soldier backed out rapidly, and, lowering his rifle, fired.

CHAPTER XXI

PIGS IN INHANAHAN

This affair of Absalem was responsible, more than anything else, for the feeling of uneasiness which was now creeping, like a thin mist, up the valley; chilling the spirits of those who were on the verge of reconciliation. No council had met, because it was not certain that murder had been done; it was not until two weeks after Absalem's departure that the news of his end had filtered through from the west.

Many persons were eager to punish the Beni Krama, and curiously, among those who so desired were a number who had disliked Absalem and who had cried against him loudly when he had gone to Fez to live with the Ulad Abd el Mumen. Most of the Beni Tadmut felt, however, that Absalem had received his deserts, although perhaps in too harsh a way. They would have liked to fasten the guilt on some member of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, but the motive was lacking, as well as evidence. At the same time they did not wish to accuse any one of their own community.

Mingled with the whole incident was the Riffian folk-concept of rabies, the idea that an evil spirit enters the body of the dog, and then of the man, and struggles for mastery, manifesting itself at times by fits, frothings, and bitings. At length the spirit gains complete control, and the body dies. According to this ancient no-

tion, it was not necessary that the dog should have entered Absalem's house by human agency, since a jinn in the body of a dog could leap through the gap in the roof by itself. This was argued by many, and it was an orthodox explanation, yet nevertheless other men, even some who would not admit such an inner opinion, felt that the dog had been directed by a human brain, and human hands as well.

Some blamed Haddu the grandfather of Moh Umzien for not having killed the dog sooner, when he had first seen that it was possessed, but Haddu swore that it had been ill one day only, and that he had left it alive in order to make sure that it was not merely suffering from distemper.

At any rate, when the gay season of grape-picking came on, there was little gaiety. The Ulad Abd el Mumen sensed the attitude of their neighbours, and instead of sleeping on the hillsides near their vines, as was their custom at this time of year, they retired each night to their houses.

Moh Umzien was now living in a small house on the north side of the stream, since without women he could not keep the large house of the Malim Hamidu warm, and this smaller building had a room of diminutive size, tight and freshly whitewashed, which was very comfortable and which would be the best place in which to live during the oncoming winter. Several of the men and boys who had also come from el Hajeb without women lived there with him.

One night when Moh Umzien, a cousin of his father's, and a half-dozen other men were sleeping there, a great crash was heard on the roof. Gobbets of fresh clay—

for the roof was new—fell down upon the sleepers, who awoke instantly. The Beni Tadmut were up to their old tricks. Some of the men in the room had, from their lookout across the valley, seen the same thing happen before, and all of the boys had heard it described many times how the men of Teliwin had been massacred. They would not let it happen again.

They stood up quickly and pressed their backs against the walls, with their guns in their hands. The crashing and tramping continued, and the clay kept falling. A foot protruded through the broken withes between two rafters. Moh Umzien reached up with both hands and seized the foot, which he could see plainly enough in the moonlight which shone through the hole it had made. Lifting his own feet from the ground, Moh Umzien swung on it. The leg came down quickly, until, attended by a scream of pain, the man's crotch struck the rafter.

A gun barrel was then thrust through and fired, hitting the middle of the floor. A pair of hands seized the weapon and wrenched it downward. The jumping increased, and then two rafters gave way. Four men fell through, and were leapt upon by knife-brandishing defenders. Moh Umzien succeeded in dragging the rest of his man through the roof. This latter, however, was unable to struggle. He rolled about on the floor in agony; hence Moh Umzien turned his attention to others.

The Tadmutis still on the roof fired down through the large hole their kinsmen had made. They hit one of the Ulad Abd el Mumen in the shoulder, but immediately after killed one of their own men who was engaged in

a knife fight, and so desisted. The Ulad Abd el Mumen got the better of this combat, for they killed three of the Beni Tadmut while but one of their own men was wounded.

When the survivors of the attacking party had fled, Moh Umzien and his companions laid the bodies of the three who had died outside the door, where the Beni Tadmut could come and fetch them if they liked. The man who had suffered so painfully on the rafter was allowed to crawl away.

Since the struggle had been short, there had been no time for Si Alush and the others living across the river to reach them with aid. These now ran panting toward them, and were soon told what had happened.

"There is only one thing to do," said Si Alush, "and that is to assemble in the Malim Hamidu's house by the river and to prepare for a siege. The whole pack of them will be down on us before we know it."

"But it was their fault," cried Moh Umzien. "They started it! They attacked us unawares, without provocation!"

"You are too young to talk of provocation," replied the schoolmaster. "If you wish to find that, you must look back many years. Old coals glow long beneath the ashes after the house has been burned, and after the coals have ceased their glowing, the ashes stay warm."

"Let us call a council," said Moh Umzien, "and receive justice."

"A council!" grunted one of the older men. "What good is a council to us? We no longer dominate it, for the Malim Hamidu is dead and his memory is made filthy by the mouths of his enemies, those who were jealous

of him. If you want justice, you will find it not in the council, but here."

Saying this, the old man tapped his gun.

"Come, no more talking," said Si Alush. "Pick up all there is to eat here, and the jugs. We must be gone."

"As things were in the beginning, so they continue throughout time with but little change. The difference is in faces and in weapons only. The thoughts of the people and the events which happen repeat themselves again and again; if one were ageless and unseen and could witness all that is done, like God, one might see the folly of it. Here we lie in this same house in which we suffered from hunger and cramping and weariness. Here we lie in the very place from which we were sent forth ragged and without food to seek a new country. Here we suffer and starve and thirst, and spend sleepless nights. Our cattle wither and the stench of our own accumulated excrement will at length drive us out."

It was an old woman who intoned this, chanting it out in a singsong voice, while rocking slowly from side to side as she sat on her haunches, in a corner of the courtyard. She was one of those few who had insisted on returning, to die in her home.

"Hush!" said Moh Umzien, plucking her arm, and leaning down over her face. "Don't do that! You will discourage the men."

"If the sky should open and we could see God, we would find that his lips were curled in shame, to witness men acting so madly in the same place and the same way a second time," she continued without noticing the interruption.

Two of the women now came out of the house, and picked her up, with her legs still doubled under her. Carrying her into a room with them, they shut the door.

The old woman was far from wrong. The Ulad Abd el Mumen had been cooped up in their house for forty days and only the women had gone out at night with revolvers to fetch water. Even they had been shot at, and one hit in the hand. A deep pit had been dug in a corner of the courtyard to serve as closet, and this was heaped and rotting and buzzing with flies. The stench of it had sickened all so that they could scarcely eat the small rations still left them.

There had been but little fighting, yet the watch had been constantly kept on both sides, and every one who had exposed himself for a second had been wounded or killed. On the fortieth night the men of Ulad Abd el Mumen crawled out and dug a deep trench in the soft alluvial soil in front of the house. Only two were hit doing this, for the sortie was not discovered until the trench had been scraped deep enough to afford shelter to a man lying down.

Here the air was fresh and the newly turned earth gave off a clean smell. The dampness from the nearby water was also invigorating. The Ulad Abd el Mumen were inspired to fresh action. Some of them left the trench and crawled up on the mountainside behind them, taking positions wherever they could. None of them were hit doing this.

When daylight came a great fusillade commenced, and many of the Beni Tadmut and Ikhuanen were hit by those who had taken up new positions. There was considerable scrambling about and shifting on both sides,

and several hand-to-hand combats were fought in sheltered places. The allies were clearly losing the most men, yet it would be impossible to drive all of them off or to resist eventual surrender. Still, if the allies kept on, they would lose more men than the loot would be worth.

In the afternoon Bukkeish walked up with the preceptor of Ikhuanen, unarmed and bearing a flag. Bukkeish called Si Alush outside, and the three discussed terms.

"The Beni Tadmut started this fight," said Si Alush the schoolmaster, "and it was their fault. We were living here peacefully and did nothing to incite them. It was only their arrogance and the desire to humiliate those who had been greater than themselves. They started it and we will pay nothing. They should be made to pay us, but since we are outnumbered, I suppose that you will not render justice."

"Be less bitter," replied Bukkeish.

"Less bitter?" Si Alush sneered. "How can you say 'less bitter,' you who drove us out of our own valley, the valley settled and cleared and terraced by Abd el Mumen, our ancestor? You whose forebears were heathen, prayerless and eaters of pig."

"You must be not only less bitter, but also more careful," warned Bukkeish, whose face was becoming red. "Otherwise I will go back to the council, and the tale shall be told a second time."

"Our tale will never be told again," replied Si Alush. "We have come back here to stay. We will fight you until every man of us is dead. We will give guns to our women and to the children who have not yet learned to talk. We belong on this land, and you may kill us but

you cannot drive us off again. Try it, and see how many of your own people die first."

Bukkeish looked at Si Alush for some time in silence. It was the preceptor of the Ikhuanen who at length spoke.

"I am an old man," he said. "I have never fought, nor even held a gun. I have lived a long while, and no one holds any grudge against me, as far as I know. I have been watching this feud ever since it began, and I knew the Malim Hamidu well and he was a man of fine quality. Let Bukkeish not take offence at this, for it is true. Sometimes the fault has been on one side, and sometimes on the other. It all began with a mistake, which could have been righted if every one had not been so stubborn and hot-headed.

"This time the Ulad Abd el Mumen are not at fault. You can put me out of my mosque, Bukkeish, if you like, for turning against you. Let them rest; let all stop fighting. Let there be no fines and no exilings."

"I will not throw you out of your mosque," said Bukkeish with great deliberation, "for there is something in what you say, and there is something in what Si Alush says too. And there is something else that neither of you have mentioned at all, which is even more important. You have all perhaps heard that the Spaniards have changed. They are no longer few and disorganised, and content with Melilla and the Island of Nekor. They have started things stirring in the east, and some day this may become serious. Every one laughs, and says: 'Oh, the Spaniards, what are they but eaters of bullfrogs?' but all the same it is not sensible for us to keep on fighting internally and killing each other off. We have more in

common with each other than we have with them. I fought them in the east when I was young, and I know."

"A good excuse," muttered Si Alush under his breath.

"What was that?" asked Bukkeish.

"It was nothing," said Si Alush. "Now that you are worried about the Spaniards, what do you propose to do with us?"

"Only one thing. You say that the Beni Tadmut started the trouble this time, but that is only partly true. They are upset because Moh Umzien is in the valley, he who is the son of Mimun, the man who broke the sanctity of the Aid el Kebir. As long as Moh Umzien is here, they will be uneasy, and there will be trouble."

"We will all die before we will send him back to Fez," said Si Alush with precise enunciation.

"You must nevertheless get rid of him," answered Bukkeish.

Si Alush did not reply. He was trying to control his anger. Even he, the gentle schoolmaster, who was the coolest of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, was feeling the effects of the strain.

At this point the preceptor of the Ikhuanen spoke up. "Why not send him to his relatives in Inhanahan instead?" he suggested. "That is not the same as going to Fez, for he will still be in the Rif. Yet he will be far enough away to please the Beni Tadmut."

"If he goes there, he must take an oath not to set foot in this valley until he is sent for," added Bukkeish.

Si Alush at length replied: "The boy must decide this for himself. I will not force him to do anything. I am responsible to his father for him, and will make no such decision. I will go in and fetch him."

As Si Alush returned to the house, the effects of his confinement appeared plainly in his gait. The man was tired out, and could not help showing it. Soon he came out with Moh Umzien, who squatted down beside the preceptor and Bukkeish.

"What do you want of me?" he asked the latter.

"You must go to Inhanahan and live with your father's cousin, old Hend, until we send for you. You must never set foot in the Vale of Iherrushen, until you are bidden."

"What if I refuse?" the boy enquired.

"If you refuse, the fight will go on, and all of you will be killed."

"What do you think, Si Alush?" asked Moh Umzien.

The schoolmaster hung his head to avoid the boy's glance.

"Very well," said Moh Umzien, rising. "I will go now. If you do not keep your side of the bargain I will not sleep until you have been paid back."

Moh Umzien put his belongings in a donkey panier, and slung it over his shoulder. He kissed Si Alush on the forehead, which was difficult since the latter was sobbing. He kissed the women on their foreheads likewise, and clasped hands with the men.

"Come up and see me now and then," he said, and walked out through the gate of his grandfather's house.

He climbed the valley alone, just as his father had before him. Up past Izgwawen, past Tarosht, past Bisnes, and through Telmest he walked, and the women peered at him through partly opened doors. Down he went to Temjunt, where the men straightened their backs from their reaping to watch him.

He strode across the sandy plain outside Bured, and, having skirted this to the left, arrived at Inhanahan. It was dark now, and he had trouble climbing the slope to his cousin's house, which stood in a steep place. The dogs barked as he approached, but no door opened. There were two doors, and he pushed one in. A dozen pigs rushed out, tumbling and squealing.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Moh Umzien, "so my cousin keeps pigs!"

He laid his panier down and sat on it. He commenced to weep, but suddenly burst out laughing, and could not stop. Tears fell from his eyes onto his shaking cheeks.

The other door opened, and a woman came out.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I am your cousin, Moh Umzien," he gasped. "Don't you know me? I have come to live with you, and to work for you. Where is my cousin Hend?"

"He is away, but will be back to-morrow. Come into the house, I will carry your panier."

CHAPTER XXII

A CHARM AGAINST LEAD

"Write me an amulet that will be proof against Christian bullets; I have brought you a sheet of lead to make it with," said Shaib.

It was the sworn-brother of Moh Umzien who spoke, he who had delivered the grandson of the Malim Hamidu from the tusks of the wild boar, and who had hauled him out of the Cave Under the Ogress with a turban. Shaib reached into his scrip and brought out the lead, which he handed to the student. The latter, without answering, picked up a reed pen, and dipping this into a bowl of ink, commenced writing on the metal. He had to do this slowly and with much repetition, since the ink could only with difficulty be made to stay where it had been traced.

In front of him books were propped on a mat, and he was copying words from all of them. Only one was a Koran; the others, works of magic, called for the intervention of the jinns. These latter were forbidden and it was only because he knew Shaib well that he used them in his presence. When the scribe had finished writing he blew on the metal gently, and when it was dry he handed it back, in the bony fingers of a pale hand, which Shaib could see was innocent of farming.

Shaib handled his new charm gingerly, lest he rub off the writing. Wrapping it in a kerchief, he placed it in

an outer pocket of his scrip, from the main cavity of which he drew two handfuls of Spanish dollars. Having counted these out and placed them on the mat, he kissed, on rising, the learned one's close-shaven scalp. Stooping again, he climbed out of the low-set doorway of the mosque, and, once outside, looked about him.

Behind him the sun had set over the mountain of Bayu, and down in the valley below there had already gathered a haze of darkening moisture, turning to a dull black the dark green foliage of the olive trees which grew beside the stream. Except for the glassy tinkling of the Tighza, all in Tiddest was silent.

Softly, however, and very slowly, so gradually as to seem part of the silence, there commenced a sound. This seemed no earthly noise, and seeped into the marrow of those who heard it. The young students, led by the preceptor, were beginning their evening prayer. Across the steep valley from the cantonal mosque on the hilltop it flowed, the chant of young voices calling gently in Arabic, a language which they who sang it scarcely comprehended, in verses the gravity of which they felt without understanding.

Shaib listened to it with more than usual attention, for it might be his last time. The rhythm, hypnotising in its monotonous simplicity, and its seemingly discordant harmony, could not fail to induce a feeling of awe in whoever heard it. Shaib paused, and in the dim light looked back at the white mosque upthrust behind him, and at the grey slabs marking the graves of those old heathen converted by the two ancient saints.

It seemed very peaceful to-night in the valley of Tiddest. Under the influence of the chanting, Shaib pic-

tured it as having always been the same, and thought how its peace might soon be ruptured by a company of the uncircumcised and unclean, trampling up the watercourse, their trousers flapping; singing discordant ribaldry, guzzling like wild swine from the clean springs, hacking down olive and almond trees, and making overt gestures at the women shrinking in doorways. This picture made him tremble. He was already in a state of excitement bordering on ecstasy.

The chant soon ended. Shaib strode, sure-footed now, down the narrow trail to his mother's house. His mother sat crouching over a charcoal fire, cooking supper in a brown earthen pot, her face to the door. As her son entered and sat on the dirt floor beside her, the booming of distant artillery echoed up the valley.

"It is nothing," said Shaib. "The small men, the fathers of bullfrogs, are afraid of the dark."

His mother did not reply. She sat almost encompassing the tiny glow of fire, her seared and prematurely ancient face bent over the stew, which she stirred with a spoon of olive wood. Slowly the mist of the stream bed began to crawl furtively into the house. Somewhere a jackal howled, and the dogs answered. Shaib arose and shut the door.

They ate their meal in silence, dishing the nourishing broth from a single bowl with broken pieces of bread. When Shaib's mother had washed the bowl and pot and put them away, and the charcoal glow had weakened more and more, until the shadows of the two loomed large and distorted on the wall, the young man spoke.

"Cut a piece of leather from that goathide you tanned last week, and sew this charm in it."

"What kind of a charm is it?" she asked.

"It is a writing proof against lead," he replied.

"Who wrote it for you?" she enquired.

"Si Mohend the Hazel-eyed, a student up at the mosque."

"His charms work," the woman said. "He wrote one once for a lover of my younger sister. The man buried it under her threshold, and it kept her angry with her husband until he died."

Shaib's mother looked at him intently.

"Let's leave it until morning," she said. "I am very tired to-night, and so are you. We both need sleep."

"Sew it up to-night," said Shaib. "I cannot tell when I may need it."

"No, I won't touch it!" his mother exclaimed, now fully aroused. "You mustn't leave the house to-night! Your father was brought in four months ago, on the door of the mosque. I will not let you go. Let the other women lose their sons, they who have borne many. Remember that you are my only son."

"I will never forget it, mother," replied Shaib. "It is a great shame to you that you bore my father no others. Don't talk about it. Sew up my amulet, or I will go anyway without it."

The woman straightened her cramped legs slowly, and standing up, reached for the goathide, which had been slung over a rafter. With fingers nimbler than they looked, she enclosed the costly bit of metal in a trim leathern jacket, tightly double stitched along the edges, and fastened a long thong to the top of it. Shaib, lifting up his shirt, tied the guardian script about his waist next to the skin.

He threw off his brown woollen jellaba and donned an old one full of holes, the same that he wore on plough days in the rain. Snatching his Mauser from under a pile of blankets, and fishing a cartridge belt out from a chin-high raisin basket, he girded and armed himself.

"Have you any bread, mother, freshly baked?" he asked.

The old woman handed him two barley loaves still warm from the oven, and these he placed in the hood of his jellaba, which hung over his shoulders. Drawing three hand grenades from a hole in the floor which had been covered by a box, he lowered these carefully into his leathern scrip.

"I am going now," he said. "If I don't come back, look in the tea-box under the tea. You will find a paper there. It tells what shall be done with the ploughland and the trees my father left me."

The door opened for a moment, letting in the dank smell of the valley, and closed again, leaving the old woman alone with the last embers of the fire. The dampness of the night, mingled with the rich smell of moulding vegetation, entered the boy's nostrils and strengthened him. Although the sky was full of clouds, and the place where the moon should have been was marked with but a dull, whitish glow, Shaib had no difficulty finding the way, since he knew the land so well. First he followed the Bayu downstream, as far as the gorge of Aswil, where the banks of the river are covered with tall pine. This was the border of Beni Urriaghel, and a favourite lurking place for highwaymen.

Shaib cut up to the right over a mountain, and was now in Beni Tuzin. He walked for hours, sometimes

running, for he had a long way to go; passing between villages, over crests, and through clumps of cedar. He had gone this way to the market of Meidhar, and knew the trails. Coming out at length on a bare ridge, he looked down and took account of what he saw.

There below and ahead of him, in round tents, some dark and others lighted from within, slept and talked the enemy. Over on a flat place which had once been a fertile barley field slumbered those droning vultures, the airplanes of the Christians. It was against these inanimate birds, the spreaders of human carrion, that his wrath was directed, and for a reason of his own.

Two days ago his mother had climbed the Vale of Iherrushen across the pass to Temjunt, through Beni Amart and down to Targuist, where a women's market was being held. She had gone this distance to be with the mother of Rakia, a girl whom Shaib had met on the mountain while he was tending goats, and whom he had wanted to marry. He was old enough now, and since his father's death had enough money. He had intended to bring Rakia to his father's house, and between them they would have taken care of his mother, as she grew older. His mother had spoken with Rakia's mother, at first cautiously, then openly. The latter had agreed, and nothing remained to be settled but the price. This would not be much, for times were getting hard. Goods could not be passed through from Melilla, and there was no trading in cloth, tea, or sugar.

Shaib's mother had left the market. As she was climbing the path away from it, she saw the woman with whom she had been talking join Rakia, her daughter, who was selling eggs in the middle of the market. Sud-

denly a great buzzing commenced, and over the crest of the mountain crawled an airplane, flying, in its graceless fashion, faster than a hawk.

When directly over the clustered women, it dropped a hissing bomb. Up flew the dirt, and stones and bushes with it. The plane turned, and circling back dropped a second, and then a third. Shaib's mother stood horror-stricken on the path. Clods, bushes, and pieces of women strewed the place of barter. She ran down and examined one piece of flesh after another. Finally she found a tress of hair attached to a torn remnant of scalp. It was glossy and reddish brown, and a small coin on a silver chain was caught in it. This was Rakia.

As Shaib thought of this scene he ground his molars together so that they made a sound. He clutched the breech of his Mauser as if he were strangling a man, and strode downward as if he were kicking him in the face. He soon saw the folly of this conduct, however, and descended more carefully.

He commenced muttering to himself: "The woman-killers, the meat-cutters, the ogres that leave what they have killed, without eating it. Even the vultures on the mountain have shame, compared to them. I will cut their iron throats, I will strangle them, before the sun rises."

The moon broke through a mass of leavened cloud. Directly below him now loomed the tents, the walls of some shaken by late carousing; and a little beyond them shone silvery and cold the gaunt wings of the nerveless birds he had sworn to destroy. To reach them he would descend and crawl through the midst of the tents. This pleased him. To keep all his wits upon the task, to choke

back a welling madness of grief, he had chosen the most difficult way.

As he descended within earshot of the enemy, he took care to make as little noise as possible, feeling out each foothold with his toes and holding his rifle so that it would not strike against the rocks. Below him on a stone sat, or rather reclined, a sentry. Dressed in a campaign-worn Spanish uniform, with cotton coat and trousers thin, and in places rent, without leggins and barefoot, the soldier, kept from sleeping at his post by the cold, expended all his efforts in an attempt to compress his body into globular form.

Shaib, come to flatter ground, lay on his stomach and quietly drew his rifle inside his jellaba. Here it would neither glint, should the moon come out, nor make a sound. At times the sentry would look up; and when he did so, Shaib would lie flat without moving, concealed, if possible, by a rock. The bare flanks and edges of the rocks felt cold against his shins and forearms each time he touched them.

Without much risk of detection, Shaib had soon passed the sentry. The latter, having at length found one attitude which seemed to him most nearly satisfactory, was quiet now and not likely to turn.

Shaib hesitated a moment, contemplating the tents. Directly below him lay one in which noise had not yet ceased. Harsh Galician voices were carrying on a conversation, which, although he could understand none of it, he knew to have been inspired by wine, a substance of which he had heard, but which he had never seen. This tent obviously would not suit his plans.

Further to the left, directly behind the sentry's back, loomed up in the moonlight another squat canvas toadstool. From it issued no sound, and its sides moved only as the slight wind struck it, and not with the gestures and nocturnal stumblings of men. He crawled to the side of this, and laying his head on the damp ground next the canvas, listened. No sound could he hear, except the steady breathing of exhausted men. Not until he had listened in this way for five minutes or more, however, was he satisfied that the soldiers were well asleep.

He glanced around a last time at the sentry; after which, quietly drawing his long knife from its sheath, he set to work. First he made a fold in the canvas near the ground, and bit this with his teeth. Then he held another fold, about a foot from the first one, in his left hand. Drawing these two folds near so that there was no tension between them, he cut, with the knife in his right hand, a slit large enough to admit his body into the tent. Owing to his precaution, no sound of ripping accompanied his action.

Having listened a moment before crawling in, he did this very slowly, feeling every inch ahead of him, so as not to touch the slumbering soldiers inside. Once in the centre of the tent, he waited until his eyes had become accustomed to the lessened light, and could see all its occupants plainly. There were three, one sleeping on his stomach, and two on their backs. Shaib looked about him for discarded clothing, but found none. On account of the chill of the night, what meagre uniforms the men possessed they had worn to bed with them.

Shaib unwound his turban, and thrusting this cloth into the lips of one who slept with his mouth open, and

as quickly grinding it in with his knee, he strangled the man with his hands. The soldier made many spasmodic movements with his arms and legs, and at length was still. Shaib did not relinquish his hold until several minutes had passed, for he knew that it takes time to strangle a man to death.

The second man he disposed of in the same way. There remained, however, the third, he who was lying face to the ground, and how to kill him without noise was a problem. He had moved, several times, during the strangling of his companions, and was now giving signs of being soon to awake. Shaib saw that if he waited any longer he might be discovered, and once an outcry had been made, he would have little chance of succeeding in his plans. Without further delay he lifted up his enemy's head, bound it swiftly around the jaws, and thrust his knife deep between the ribs below the left shoulder blade. It took all his strength to hold the gag in place and to keep the dying man from kicking the walls of the tent.

He undressed the largest of the corpses, and removing his own clothing, he dressed in the uniform. With his still bloody knife he sheared off his own pigtail before putting on the brimless military cap. Over his new jacket, which fitted him too tightly, he slung four cartridge belts, his own and those of the men he had slain. Changing his hand grenades from his leathern scrip to the pockets of his drab trousers, and snatching up his rifle, he walked boldly out through the flap of the tent.

Directly ahead of him, dull silver now as the moon passed behind a cloud, lay the airplanes. As Shaib approached them, a nauseating stench smote his nostrils.

This aviation field, so clean looking from on high in the moonlight, was also the common retiring ground of the camp. Choking back his disgust, he determined that the foulness of the place should serve him in good stead. As he passed beyond the last row of tents and onto the field, he spied another sentry, sitting on a cartridge box.

"Halt!" cried the sentry. "Who passes?"

Shaib grinned broadly, tapped his trousers, and made other graphic gestures, thanking God that in this camp of legionaries his ignorance of Spanish would not be questioned.

"You are not the only one who has it," replied the sentry; and Shaib, as he passed by, made a play of loosening his clothes.

Once near the planes, he did not hesitate. One at a time, and swiftly, he drew his hand grenades from his pockets. One at a time, and swiftly, he bit out the pins, and cast the grenades into the forward seats of the planes. Then he ran, downstream and bearing toward the mountain from which he had come, while three rapid explosions shook the air behind him.

Indulging his pride in one look back, he witnessed the wreckage he had made. Never again would those planes drop bombs on upland markets; never again would brave men scurry from them like ants into the holes they had dug in the sides of valleys.

In a moment the sentry, who had been sitting on a box, was firing at him. Luckily the moon stayed hidden behind its cloud, and the earth-coloured uniform coat, unbuttoned now and flickering from side to side in the small light, made a poor target for a sleepy man.

Shaib reached the foot of the mountain before reinforcements joined the sentry, and by the time that his pursuers had come to where the terrain rose and became more difficult, he was high above them and nearing the path which led home.

He was beginning to feel safe and to let his imagination exult in what he had done, when a shot fired from above drove such thoughts from his head. Who could have fired at him? Was it Riffians deceived by his uniform? If so, he had not long to live, unless he were to cry out the formula of salvation, "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is the Messenger of God, God is Most Great." But should he shout this, and he thought of it just in time, and should those who fired on him be members of a Spanish night patrol, then he would surely be killed, after having so plainly revealed his religion as well as his exact position.

He dropped into a crevice of the rocks to decide what to do. The Spaniards below, hearing the shot from on high, commenced firing in his direction, and soon he was crouching low while a fusillade from two directions scattered bullets to either side of him and over his head. There was no danger of being hit by a well-aimed shot, but there was danger from stray ones. It did not take him long to decide that if those above had been Riffians they would not have continued firing at the same target as the Spaniards.

There was little chance, for the present, of gaining the homeward path. He crawled about quietly in search of better shelter, and at length found the small mouth of a narrow cave. This reminded him of the Cave Under the Ogress, and of Moh Umzien. He wished that Moh Um-

zien were with him. Without losing any time he scrambled into the hole. Advancing on his hands and knees, and at places flat on his stomach, he did not stop to turn around until he had placed a bend in the passage between himself and the entrance. Luckily this part of the cave was dry and floored with sand.

After he had lain there, his rifle in his hand, for what seemed to him far too long a time, a faint light began to screen past the bend of the passage. As this light grew brighter, he was able to see the place in which he had taken refuge. The sand between him and the mouth was scarred and furrowed by the tracks and scrapings he had made crawling in. Behind him lay countless porcupine tracks, some of that animal's droppings, and dried out bones of smaller mammals and birds.

Now and then faint shouts floated in to him, indicating that the search had not ended. He must stay here until the following night before he might hope to escape. But the tracks and other disturbances at the mouth of the cave, should a soldier spy them, would reveal his hiding place. He must, as soon as possible, smooth them over.

To do this properly, he should start at the mouth and work backwards, since otherwise he would make the same marks over again. Cautiously he crawled forward, rifle in hand. It was awkward keeping the rifle in defensive position through this narrow place. He had passed the bend now, and advanced more cautiously, craning his neck upward so that the blood vessels became knotted and stood out under the skin.

At first the strong light dazzled him, so that he could not see whether or not any one was watching him. As

his eyes grew accustomed to the glare, he could make out plainly, through the irregular opening, the contour of the rocks immediately ahead, and through a gap in them, a section of the camp. Of the airplanes two came within his angle of vision. They had burned after the explosions, and like birds whose feathers have been singed, seemed but skeletal likenesses of themselves. The motor had fallen out of one, and was hanging from the other at a slant.

While Shaib was looking at them, he suddenly felt a sharp burning pain flash through his shoulder, at the same time that a loud rifle crack deafened his ears. He scurried back around the bend and felt, as his left arm hung limp, the sharp piercing pain change to a duller throbbing one.

The only reason, he thought when once out of range, that there had been no second shot, was that whoever had wounded him had ducked behind a rock afterward in fear of a return volley. Then Shaib thought of his charm against lead. He felt madly for it. The amulet was gone. Soon the explanation occurred to him. While changing his clothing in the tent, without light and in the tension caused by the presence of the three men he had killed, it had somehow fallen off, and he had forgotten to make sure that it was in place. That was why he had been wounded. Fear came over him. The charm was gone and Christian lead had seared into his flesh. There was nothing now to keep more lead out, and, now that his hiding place had been discovered, no chance of escape.

Salt sweat dripped from his temples as he lay there prostrate, and some of it, trickling along his skin, entered

his eyes and made them smart. All at once he realised how tired he was, and how faint from excitement and loss of sleep. The dim contour of the passage ahead of him blurred. His grip on his rifle weakened. He must do something quickly or he would soon die.

Twisting his neck around and clamping his lips to the wound in his shoulder, he drank deeply of his own blood. This was what he had heard older men tell of doing, and the blood tasted good. Gasping after the long draught, and blinking, he felt strength and courage return to him. Yes, he would die, but it would be a worthy death. They would not take him without a battle. As the strength came back to him his ears began to record sound outside the cave, faint sounds, but tense ones; the voices of soldiers shouting. Soon there would be fifty of them, he thought, in front of his cave. All the better. He would kill as many as he could.

CHAPTER XXIII

A HERO IS INTERRED

On the same day, the rich glow of late afternoon, flowing through the door of Bukkeish's mosque, lit up a brilliant patch on the plaster of the inside wall which faces toward Mekka. Stencilled in this patch, and reaching into the shadow on either side, sat a company of twenty men, squatting easily on the earthen floor, the tails of their brown jellabas drawn over their shins against the slight chill which increased with the lowering of the sun into the Vale of Iherrushen to the west of them.

Some of the faces, drawn closely together in conference, were seared and browned from ploughing in the rain and from reaping under the sun; others were freckled, and a few, those of scribes and of rich men who hired others to do their work, were white and smooth.

In the centre of the council, facing the door, reposed the huge figure of the Hajj Bukkeish. His sixty years had thickened his body, not with corpulence, but with strength. His hands, with their long, knotted fingers, were not the hands of the ploughman so much as those of the warrior, strong at the trigger and the hilt, while but little roughened by the hoe. His beard, heaviest beneath his chin in the manner of a Cornish fringe, projected, red and unruly, and shook springily as he spoke. Over a pair of grey-blue eyes hung a powerful brow, and his face

and head were broad through cheekbone and temple. Slow, deliberate, and exact, he was a warrior who had gained leadership through his faculty of keeping cool while others lost their heads. It was this quality rather than exceptional intelligence which had made him powerful, and had worked to his advantage in his life-long rivalry with the hot-headed Ulad Abd el Mumen.

"They have passed as far as el Azib of Meidhar, and have been camped there for seven days. The mountain men of Beni Tuzin have harassed them but have not driven them out. Who can tell when the Spaniard will pack his tents and go westward, marching, shortly after, up the Bayu into our valley?

"This is not a time for tribe to set itself against tribe and village against village. We have one foe, all of us, and we are all Muslimin faithful to the Written Word. We have been shedding each other's blood for a long while, and it is time we stopped. The men of Ikhuanen and of Iherrushen are not enough to dislodge them from Meidhar. If we do not dislodge them soon, they will be marching up the valley leading mules laden with machine guns. It is time to drive them from the lee of the mountains into the dry plain from which they came, and, if God wishes, out into the sea.

"As you all know, I have a certain influence to the north and west of us. You, Si Alush, will go to Timarsga, and you, Athemran the Fat, to Taurirt of the Beni Urriaghel. You both have kinsmen in those places. Bring them here. Let you of Tarosht seek out your sworn brothers in Beni Amart, and you, Moh Umzien, fetch me the men of Taghzuth, among whom your grandfather sojourned. They may not be much good at

fighting, but they can bring their tools and kits with them, to make powder and mould lead, and mend guns and scrips. Be off at daybreak and see that you report back in seven days' time."

The last envoy addressed stood up and tightened his belt. Moh Umzien had been recalled from Inhanahan a few weeks previously, and Bukkeish had greeted the young man with great cordiality, for the first time in his life, which had made Moh Umzien immediately wonder what was required of him. When it came to fighting the Christians, thought Moh Umzien bitterly, the Ulad Abd el Mumen were not such bad people after all.

He looked at Si Alush, who was looking at him.

"Let us go outside," said Si Alush.

When the two had gone down under the olive trees, where they were sure that they would not be overheard, Si Alush said: "What do you think of this business?"

"I think we may as well do what he says," replied Moh Umzien. "There seems to be some truth in his statement, and he seems to be sincere. If he wins he will probably treat us fairly well, and we will have enough hold over him so that he will have to let our people back. If he fails we will be able to turn and get them back anyway."

Si Alush looked at the boy in admiration. "You are growing up," he said. He put his arm over Moh Umzien's shoulder, and together they re-entered the council chamber.

Bukkeish looked up at them as they entered.

"We will do as you say," said Si Alush.

"Good," replied Bukkeish, "it will be to your advantage."

"With your permission I will go home now, to get some supplies together, and to sleep," said Moh Umzien.

"One moment more," said Bukkeish. "Wait until the scribe has written a letter for you to carry to Malim Mohend of Taghzuth, who will remember me when he sees my name. Sit down until the ink has dried."

At this moment a man clothed in frayed garments entered the room, carrying a basket in the bottom of which jostled a handful of almonds and raisins. He passed directly to the chief whose seared and spacious forehead he reverently kissed.

"Things have been happening," he said.

"What things?"

"I have just come from the Spanish camp, where I have been selling almonds and raisins. There is much talk there about an attack in the night. Your sister's son Shaib wrecked the three airplanes tethered on the flat land, and escaped into the mountain. There he was surrounded, and hid in a cave. In its mouth he lay shooting until he had slain forty-three men. After that he died from loss of blood. He was wounded in the left shoulder, and the slug passed near his heart."

"Forty-three men, forty-three men," said Bukkeish slowly. "If each of you and each of your sons sells his life for no less than that, we may still not defeat them in the end. They are like the leaves on a tree, like the hairs on a lion's back."

"Where is Shaib's body?" asked Moh Umzien.

"It is outside the cave. The soldiers cut off his ears, but the rest is there."

At this Moh Umzien became very angry.

"They cut off his ears!" he cried. "I swore an oath

with him! I will cut off more than their ears, and from many of them!"

As he shouted this, Moh Umzien snatched his rifle from the wall and started forth. Before he had passed the porch Bukkeish had arisen, and the strong arms of the leader were about him in an unbreakable grip.

"There is no sense in losing your life too," said the latter, in a tone of greater gentleness than Moh Umzien had expected from him. "This isn't a feud, it is a war. The Christians are too strong for separate vengeance. All of us must work together, under a single command."

"That is very good," replied Moh Umzien in less heat than before, "but think of his body lying by the mouth of the cave. When the night comes the jackals will tear it, and the wolves will carry parts of it away. Perhaps the vultures are at it now, pecking away at his eyes. Let me go, with two others, to bring him back to the mosque. I will keep my promise and start for Taghzuth in the morning."

"Promise me one thing more," demanded Bukkeish, "that you will not fire unless fired upon, and then only if there is no other way out. Get his body and bring it back, but do nothing else."

"By the truth of our Lord I promise it," said Moh Umzien, "but I will get even with them later on."

At these words Bukkeish loosed his grip and the boy departed.

Hours later, by the light of the moon, the council, not yet adjourned, sat and lay under the olive trees beside the mosque. The students from the mosque had spread grass mats and blankets under the foliage and on

these some of the members were sleeping, their knees drawn under their chins for warmth. Others sat drinking tea by a tiny charcoal fire which glowed in an earthern brazier.

Up the course of the Bayu, rising above the tinkling and scrambling noises of the stream, mounted the dull sound of muffled moaning and of grass sandals scraping on gravel and rolling on pebbles. Breaking through the mist of the valley and into the grove came Moh Umzien and two others, carrying Shaib's remains on the door of a tomb. Behind them, hunched over in despair, walked Shaib's mother, holding folds of her loose bodice over her lowered face. From out the cloth issued sounds of grief.

Moh Umzien and his companions carried the body into the mosque, and gently set down the door with its burden. A dozen students who had been sleeping in another room entered with little noise. Spreading a white cloth on the floor near the body, they gently moved it from the door to the sheet. One of them lit beeswax candles and placed them at head and feet, while another brought hot water and soap and commenced washing the body, after the Spanish uniform had been removed and carried outside. Only one of the students concerned himself with the washing; the others sat on their haunches and commenced chanting a prayer.

Moh Umzien did not wait for the rest of the formalities to be completed. He had done his share in bringing the body back, and he had a long day's journey ahead of him. He picked up his rifle and started for Taghzuth.

After a few hours had elapsed, Shaib's mother and a kinswoman appeared at the door, set down a bowl of

kuskus, a basket containing fried pancakes, and a plate of honey and butter. Having left these, they disappeared.

When the day had broken the students, carrying the now shrouded corpse on the door which had borne it up the valley, climbed down from the mosque and forded the Tighza, lifting up their skirts as they did so, and raising the door to their shoulders. Once across, they commenced the steep ascent to the cantonal mosque, the whitewashed walls of which gleamed in the fresh glow from the east.

Atop the hill, still perspiring from the climb, they set at once to hacking out a grave with broad-bladed hoes. They made a trench about seven feet long and two wide. After they had been digging a while one of the students, a youth of medium stature, jumped in, and measured the depth against his body. The lip came to his waist. The outer hole was now of the right depth.

After a moment's rest they dug a second trench within the first, making it as long as Shaib's body, and equal in width to the distance between the thumb-tip and little finger tip of the hand of the largest student present. This made the inner grave about one foot wide. When it was deep enough, the students covered the bottom with juniper branches and forced the body into the lower trench, lying on its left side, with its feet toward the east. Since Shaib had not been fat, his body slipped in with little trouble.

Over the body they laid more juniper branches, until the inner trench was full. Then they placed flat slabs of shale over the opening, fitting small pieces into the cracks, and over all this piled back the earth. They set

a stone at head and foot, and on top of everything heaped twigs freshly broken from a holy olive tree. When these things had been done the company retreated to the porch of the mosque and, crouching together, began to chant.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE STRANGER WHO CARRIES TWO GUNS

Ten o'clock of the next morning witnessed Moh Umzien descending from the wooded height of Tizi Ifri, in the tribe of Beni Amart, in the direction of Targuist. The latter lay before him, a flat-bottomed high-lifted basin rimmed by a horseshoe of mountain crests; down its middle flowed a winding stream which fell steeply off the edge of the plain to the east, and rushed tumultuously down to the chasm bed of the Ghis, which was hard to see through the mid-day haze of heat. Beyond the Ghis rose the forbidding black bar of the Jebel Hammam, and at the north of it the unreal-looking deathly flat plain of Nekor, to the sea.

Downward and to the left, where the plain of Targuist began to hump up into low hillocks, there surged and wriggled a blotch of variegated life. The market was filling and, like the moving tentacles of an octopus, the paths which converged on the centre teemed with men and with their beasts. This was the Thursday market of Targuist, the greatest and most renowned market in the Rif. Here gathered men from the pine-clad mountains to the west and men from the fertile valleys to the east, fishermen from the coast, and, now and then, Arab traders from the south. And it was rumoured that one of the sugar-sellers was a Christian who had changed his faith.

As Moh Umzien descended and drew near, the market grew fuller. Never had he seen such a wealth of colour, never so many men and women in one place and at one time, except in Fez, and at Fez the scene lacked the freedom and the life apparent here. He soon came onto the flat land, and the market passed out of sight behind a low hill. Distances on the ground were greater than he had thought from on high. It was a full half hour before he came to the market.

He approached it from a squat hill, at the foot of which ran a small stream. On the near side of this stream, butchers had established themselves. Some of them were slaughtering goats, and one man was blowing up the skin of a calf preparatory to flaying it. On poles stretched between the trees hung quartered sheep and goats, and dripping pieces of beef. The man who was blowing up the calf smote about him from time to time with his long broad-bladed knife, to repel the too-close advances of a pack of hungry dogs, some of which were feverishly lapping up the rills of blood which ran toward the stream. Others were quarrelling over the entrails of the animals, dragging out, stretching, and snapping long pieces of intestine.

On the other side of the stream lay the market proper. Nearest the water sat women vending potatoes, turnips, eggs, and grain. Some even sold the prickly fruit of the cactus, while others crouched behind piles of hand-made pottery.

As Moh Umzien was looking at these things, he came upon a sentry seated about a gunshot from the butchers. This sentry kept watch over fifty or more rifles which leaned against a large rock. Spanish Mausers were the

most frequent, but there were a number of French pieces also, and some of the old-fashioned Taghzuthi flint-locks thrust their lean muzzles high above the rest. The sentry, in Arabic, bade Moh Umzien halt and surrender his gun.

"I am not stopping at the market, I am only going through it on my way westward. I am an envoy of the Hajj Bukkeish," replied Moh Umzien.

"It makes no difference who you are or where you are going. The Sherif has given orders that no armed man shall enter. If you are not attending the market, go around it, passing before the other sentry whom you see on the Maraha path."

Moh Umzien left his rifle with the others, for to go to Taghzuth he must pass through Zarket and Beni Bu Nsar, both of which mountain tribes were infested with bandits and through which but few passed, and they never alone. He had never gone that way before and was not sure of the trail.

Crossing the brook in a jump, he walked about among the vendors, until he came to an old woman who sold bread. From her he bought three freshly baked barley loaves, which he put in the hood of his jellaba. From a man of the Beni Bu Frah he purchased a pound of salted sardines. Fish were unknown in the Vale of Iherrushen, and Moh Umzien regarded them as a great delicacy and looked forward to finding a quiet place in which he could eat them.

He noticed the manner in which men of different regions comported themselves. There were tall men from Beni Amart, with blue eyes and yellow beards, and short round-faced men from Ajdir. When these men passed

each other they stalked by in stately fashion, looking straight ahead. Again, there were seamen from Mtiwa, with long upturned moustaches, square-built in their short, heavily embroidered jellabas. And in a group by themselves sat the men of Beni Bu Nsar and of Taghzuth. Moh Umzien knew them by their faces and clothing as well as by their wares. The Taghzuthis, who were selling fine scrips of goat skin, gaily embroidered in inlaid leather, cartridge belts with bright patterns and tassels, and powder and ball for flintlocks, were for the most part small, thin men, sallow and wrinkled. The Beni Bu Nsar, who wore ragged jellabas or none at all, were tall and bony, dark of skin, and often slant-eyed. Before them in baskets lay skins, jars of pine-tar, and bowls of jelly.

In the group of Beni Bu Nsar men, for the moment doing nothing, stood a pair of strange creatures. One held in his hands a tambourine, and the other a reed flute. The tambourine man was gigantically tall, his hips on a level with Moh Umzien's midriff, and his face a head above Moh Umzien's own. This giant wore a grizzly beard which partly covered a ludicrously child-like countenance. Under hairy brows twinkled a pair of mirthful blue eyes which matched well a snub nose and full freckled cheeks. His companion was so small as almost to merit the name of dwarf. Crooked of legs was he, and cross-eyed, his scant beard being well atoned for by an abundant sandy scalplock which fell behind him to his waist.

Moh Umzien approached them, standing near the display of a vendor of pitch. Not feeling sure of his ability

to make these Senhajans understand his Riffian Shillhah, he addressed them in Arabic.

"Oh, my uncles, can you tell me which is the best road to take for Beni Bu Nsar, and how long a journey it will be?"

"Are you walking that way?" asked the giant, with one huge hand caressing his beard as he spoke.

"I am carrying a message from the Hajj Bukkeish to the men of Taghzuth. I have been told that to reach them I must pass through your tribe," answered Moh Umzien.

"We are just now leaving for there," said the small flute-player, "and advise you not to travel that road alone. You had better come with us."

"Are there many bandits on the road?" asked Moh Umzien.

"Are there many! Hardly once a month does any one pass through. All who go across Zarket are held up at one place or another, and almost always despoiled. There are eight others of us who are about to leave. Without so great a number we wouldn't dare to risk it. If you come with us, we will charge you only two dollars Hassani for protection, and you will be well served for the price. It isn't every day that a traveller who thinks to pass Zarket finds such agreeable companions as are we. Where is your gun?"

"It is with the sentry on the Beni Amart side."

"Go fetch it, and meet us on the Tifaha side. We left ours with the sentry there—but first give us the two dollars."

"I will pay you when I meet you by Tifaha," cried Moh Umzien over his shoulder.

He did not, however, leave without interruption. As he was about to cross the brook into the butchers' smelly section, the public crier of the market raised his voice, whereupon all stood still, and in an instant a hush fell over the gathered throng.

"In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful; there is no god saving God and Mohammed is the messenger of God.

"Behold the Sherif Sidi Mohammed Akhemritch announces that upon the next week this market will be held on Wednesday and not on Thursday, since it is rumoured that the Christian (may God damn him) is planning to bomb us from on high upon the Thursday. Be this known to you and let no man reveal it to the foe. I am finished. Praise be unto God."

At the end of this announcement there commenced a great tumult. So busy were the men and women in discussing the decree, and in describing the bombing which had taken place in the nearby women's market but a few days before, that it was with difficulty that one could make his voice heard over the general outcry, with the consequence that each one spoke more and more loudly.

Moh Umzien approached the sentry and retrieved his gun. Passing between fields and over ditches, he soon joined his companions at the sentry place toward Tifaha. With them stood eight others, all pedlars, inspecting the primings of their flintlock rifles. One of them carried, beside his gun, an ancient white umbrella. This served not only as a shade against the sun but also as a steadying stick for the unwieldy firearm in shooting.

With few words Moh Umzien handed two dollars to the flute-player, and the party set out, led by the lanky

giant and his drum. Across the gently rising plain they marched, along a hoof and sandal-worn trail between two rows of sprawling cacti which, in places, stretched out their bloated green arms to catch the garments of the unwary. Once they had passed the green-roofed sanctuary of the Sherif the path grew narrower, and the ground rose more steeply.

In this manner they passed silently on to the highlands, and soon were climbing the first mountain of Zarket. The country, although bare of trees, was clothed in a thick thorny scrub which scratched the shins of the wayfarers trudging upward in single file.

Moh Umzien's halfa sandals were hot and chafing, and full of dust. Frequently the cord of one worked loose and needed retying. This annoyed him considerably, especially since he had walked all night and all morning without sleep. After he had halted by a spring with his companions, and had eaten his fish and some of his bread, he felt better.

Sometime between the hour of afternoon prayer and the hour of sunset, the eleven travellers topped the last crest before Beni Bu Nsar. For a moment there lay spread before them the sight of a vast forest to the west, stretching up a mountain the peak of which, sheathed in snow, glowed in dazzling outline in front of the sun, while the pine-clad slopes and gullies beneath it seemed to cower in black shadow. Only for a moment did they see this. The evening would soon overtake them, and the woody mountain, wherein ten of them had houses and families, was still a long way off. Consequently they lost no time in resting, but continued without stopping on the path which now led down.

This path twisted mightily, so that at one moment a man would be walking north and at the next south, and he who was behind would see the leader going in apparently the opposite direction. This trail was likewise filled with huge boulders, obscuring the road ahead, on account of which Moh Umzien, who had paused a moment to adjust his troublesome sandal-strap, lost sight of the rest of the group.

When he had finished with his sandal and was straightening up, he heard a loud, harsh voice ahead of him, and up the side a little, calling out, "Halt! all of you! Set down your guns. Put your money in one pile and your merchandise in another. Strip to the skin and lay your clothes on the ground. Quick! You will die if you loiter!"

Moh Umzien dropped to the trail. The voice had come from the upper side of the path, twenty paces below him. Taking care not to clang his firearm against the rocks, Moh Umzien crawled around a great boulder which stood between him and the voice. Worming his way upward and taking care to keep out of sight, he reached a well-hidden position behind the bandit. Now he could see him clearly. The highwayman was a short, robust person, turbanless and fiery-locked, standing with knotted hairy legs planted wide apart, and looking through the sights of a French cavalry rifle.

Below Moh Umzien the men of Beni Bu Nsar were removing their garments and placing them in an orderly pile on the ground. Taking a deliberate sight, Moh Umzien shot the bandit under the left arm-pit, which was exposed by the arm holding the trigger portion of the gun, after the manner of left-handed men.

The stricken man swung around rapidly, his face expressing astonishment more than pain, and as he fell he fired one shot, which, owing to the motion of his body, flashed low and struck a stone in front of his slayer's feet.

To Moh Umzien fell the spoils of this encounter; the fine short-barrelled rifle, the richly embroidered jellaba, and the heavily fringed scrip of finest Taghzuthi make. His own scrip, worn and discoloured, he gave to the cross-eyed flute-player.

When another half-hour had passed and the sky above the black mountain had changed from scarlet to orange and from orange to a faintly luminous yellow glow, the company walked, in high spirits, into the upland village of Temedith. Below them, on the left, ranged terrace after terrace of maize, yielding up its ripening fragrance to the fruitless heights.

The houses, which stretched in a single row along the steep flank of the mountain, were high-roofed and peaked, cross-gabled, guttered, and shingled, and the graceful carving which adorned them seemed miraculously fine to Moh Umzien. The sight of this village brought surging into the boy's mind tales which had been told him of ancient times, when the Vale of Iherrushen must have looked much like this.

They walked beneath plank platforms stretching out under the eaves and propped up by stout posts, beneath arbours of trailing grapevines, along a path confined by a sturdy wooden fence. Entering the courtyard of the largest house, they found half a dozen men bending over huge earthen cauldrons under which blazed and crackled fires of cedar, the smoke of which curled upward, leaving behind it a fragrance of great prize. A thicker,

sweeter smell spread from the cauldrons, a smell of grapes cooking and of honey. The men were making intoxicating jelly.

A tall man, long-shanked and ungainly of hands and feet, straightened his back and turned from the fires. The travellers one by one clasped his hand and kissed him on the forehead. To do the latter forced most of them to stand on tiptoes.

"Red-head," cried the tall man, who was sheikh, "go in and set things in order. These men are tired. Brew them a pot of tea."

Another of the jelly-makers, whose neck was partially covered by a luxuriant red pigtail, hastily entered the room on the right, swept the floor with a broom of juniper, and spread out mats and flat strips of cork. Having left their footgear by the door, the travellers followed him and sat, squatted, and sprawled on the area so prepared. The red-head handed them an earthen bowl of water, which was passed from mouth to mouth.

As the red-head blew with bellows upon a brazier of embers, over which steamed a kettle of water, Moh Umzien could hear the sheikh saying to his wives across the court: "A great bowl of rye kuskus, and as fast as you can. Ten of our men have come home to-night, and a stranger who carries two guns."

The meal was a strange one, but palatable and strengthening to hungry men. The rough rye of the kuskus and the strips of tough boar meat across it, gave heat for the coming cold of the night. Moh Umzien ate his meat with the others, and made no objection. He could not afford to tread upon their feelings. When the bowl had been removed and carried across the open space

to the women, and when each man had taken between thumb and forefinger a cup of steaming, mint-fragrant tea, the sheikh gave voice to the curiosity which he had politely restrained until the proper moment.

"O young man who carry two rifles, whence do you come?"

"I am from the Vale of Iherrushen, in the Gzennaya. I am carrying a message from the Hajj Bukkeish."

"The name of Bukkeish we have heard, but we know little about him. The Vale of Iherrushen is more familiar to us, since you are not the first one from there to cross over our mountain."

"It must have been the Malim Hamidu," said Moh Umzien. "He was a gunsmith who went sometimes to Taghzuth for supplies. It was in Taghzuth that he learned to build grain mills which run by water. We have one yet in the Vale of Iherrushen which he set up. God willing it will not break, for there is no one in the valley to-day who could mend it."

"It was the Malim Hamidu," repeated the sheikh, looking at Moh Umzien strangely. "The rifle I still carry was his. He gave it to me as a present when he stayed here the night, and I sent a man on to help him the next morning. He was carrying the paddle-wheel and hopper of his grain mill on the back of a mule."

For a moment there was silence. Then the sheikh, who had not ceased looking at Moh Umzien, asked: "Are you the Malim Hamidu's son?"

"No," replied the boy, "his grandson."

"A fat heritage is yours," said the sheikh. "Your grandfather was a man of great wisdom, and also of wealth."

"My heritage," said Moh Umzien quietly, "is neither wealth nor much wisdom, but a broken house, a wasted field, and a rifle. My heritage is also the pleasure of collecting payment in blood from those who killed the Malim Hamidu and my uncle Amar the Scabhead all on one day. My father has fought them but he is broken in many places and old. There has been much blood spilt on both sides, but we are not yet quits. However, for the present these things must wait."

An embarrassed silence followed this speech. Moh Umzien was young and he had spoken too much, particularly since the troubles of the Ulad Abd el Mumen were no concern of his host's. This he himself well realised.

Soon the giant with the tambourine spoke. "Moh Umzien has not told you why he carries two rifles. He killed Yahya the Left-handed coming down the Zarket trail."

Before the musician could continue, cries of astonishment burst from the sheikh and from Red-head, and from a handful of others who had unobtrusively entered and were now squatting by the door.

"Fine work," cried the sheikh, "how did you do it?"

"It was a small thing," said Moh Umzien, while the others shook their heads gravely and made clucking noises with their tongues. "It was like shooting a rabbit on the mountain, and only because by the will of God my sandal-strap broke at the proper time."

"If you call Yahya the Left-handed a rabbit," exclaimed the cross-eyed flute-player, "then the mountain between us and Taghzuth is a manure pile. Had you never heard of him before?"

Moh Umzien shook his head.

"He was the greatest outlaw since the time before Islam. His house on the mountain is an arsenal of guns taken from the men he killed. He used to walk openly into markets, and no one dared touch him. He stole boys and sold them in Ktama, and it is rumoured that he was the paid assassin for the Sherif of Targuist. Do not sell that gun of his, but use it yourself. With its great baraka * you should kill many enemies; for the men of your family have many foes, or at least, so I have heard elsewhere, and so you have said."

"We have many foes," repeated Moh Umzien, "and so have you too, if you but knew it, hiding up here on your mountain covered by fir trees from the eyes of airplanes and far from the reach of artillery. There is a war going on below you and soon you will be drawn into it. It is not a common war, of families and tribes and alliances. It is not over the rape of a woman or the murder of a man. It is a war with the Christians, and this time in earnest. It is everything or nothing. This is the word of the Hajj Bukkeish, and although his family and mine are old enemies, we have in common the desire to drive the Christians into the sea.

"Christians are without souls; their hearts are frozen up. Everything they do is in orderly fashion, without feeling or human mistake. Would you like them in here, casting dead mules in the stream to rot, fouling the saint's tomb which we passed down the road, snatching

* *Baraka* is the power which may be transmitted from one person or object to another by the mechanism of contagious magic. Thus the bravery and invulnerability of Yahya the Left-handed could be passed on to his slayer through the agency of the gun.

away your women and whipping your men? This may sound too strong to you, but if you lived elsewhere you would realise what it means. It is the time to lay aside old feuds, like a rifle in clean wool and oil, and to unite. Bukkeish is the leader, and he is a good one."

"I have heard," said the sheikh, "that there is another down at Ajdir, whom they say intends to raise the holy war. Is he under the Hajj Bukkeish, or Bukkeish under him?"

"You mean Abd el Krim," replied Moh Umzien, "but he is of less importance. He is a pimp of the Spaniards who has changed back to his own people, and how many more times he will change, no one knows. He has no one with him but the men of Ajdir, and they fishermen and traders, not fighters. The Beni Urriaghel are puffed with their own importance, and it is best not to let them have charge of a holy war, else they will treat the other tribes as badly as would the Christians. If you have any men who feel like fighting, send them to Bukkeish."

Although Moh Umzien talked in this vein for over an hour, using his best efforts of oratory to arouse some enthusiasm for battle in the mountaineers, they made no definite promises of help. Indeed, it would be hard to expect this distant folk, hemmed inside their chill valley, to understand the need of uniting with the Riffians, who had always despised and ridiculed them. The Riffians would force upon them the strict observance of the tiresome fast of Ramadan, perhaps even the ridiculous Koranic injunction against pork, and would frown upon the smoking of hemp and the swapping of wives, wherewith they whiled away the long winter nights. There was no real reason why they should send men to help the

Hajj Bukkeish, abysmally far to the east in Tiddest. Their men might never come home, and, if they did, might ridicule their parents. Despite these thoughts, they felt a great thankfulness toward the slayer of the bandit, Yahya the Left-handed.

After the tea had been drunk and the whole company had felt a stealthy drowsiness creeping over them, Moh Umzien asked the sheikh where it would please the master of the house to have him sleep. At this request the other travellers and the men who had come in to listen passed out into the courtyard and thence to their homes.

"You may sleep here," said the sheikh, "or up in the loft, or out on the platform in front of the house. And," here the man lowered his voice, and bent his seared face with its gaunt beaked nose close to Moh Umzien's own, "I will send over my wife's sister, if you like, or the wife of my nephew who is away peddling."

Moh Umzien climbed the notched post to the loft, and lay down, loosening his collar, his cartridge belt, and the string which held up his trousers. He untied his sandals and set them close by where he could reach them, and leaned his two rifles against the wall a short distance from his head. Soon he heard the door open, and for a moment a beam of moonlight penetrated.

Bare feet slapped softly across the earthen floor, and he could hear the rapid intake of her breath as his bedfellow climbed the pole. Soon he felt this breath on his shoulder where he had loosened his collar, as his companion leaned over his body to kiss his bare neck. This was Moh Umzien's first experience with a woman, and he tried to act slowly and not to show his excitement.

CHAPTER XXV

A JOURNEY TO TAGHZUTH

When Moh Umzien awoke the sun had already risen through the crevice of the valley to the east. A noise of feet in the courtyard caused him to look around. Beneath him he saw an ungainly troop of ragged men, shouldering axes and adzes, and shuffling forth in coarse leather buskins to hew wood on the mountain.

He crawled from the platform through the hole into the loft, climbed down the notched pole to the floor, and washed himself with water from a jar which he found there. The sheikh, who had been waiting in the courtyard for him to awaken, entered, stooping low as he did so, and after him came the burly drummer and the squat flute-player.

"We have decided to go on to Taghzuth," said the smaller of the musicians. "If you wish to travel with us, it will cost you nothing this time. You earned the price of it yesterday."

It was Moh Umzien's impulse to say that if any protection money should be paid, it must be to him, but instead he ignored the flute-player, and busied himself in making farewells to his host. "After all, I am a man now," he thought to himself. "There is no excuse for saying things like that."

The musicians were in a jovial mood this morning, and as they marched along the bushy path above the stream,

sang Jeballan songs continuously, fitting verse after verse to a single tune. The voice of the drummer rolled forth in a deep bass, while that of the flute-player rose to an unmanly falsetto.

The path left the neighbourhood of the stream and struck sharply upward through the blackberry bushes, so sharply that the song died a swift death when the musicians found that they needed all their wind for climbing. The blackberries were ripe, and as they walked along picking their way between the swinging thorn-laden branches they snatched off handfuls of the fruit and ate it. The berries quenched their rising thirst and allayed the first grindings of hunger.

Soon they saw fir trees rising among the bushes, and farther on the underbrush gave way utterly to a temperate forest. Beneath the trees it was dark, and the moss lay in grey shadow. Where the trees parted their heads for the path, a lacework of dazzling light danced over the grass. Moh Umzien walked, with his companions, into an open glade ankle deep in moist, luxuriant grass, of a greenness that seemed unearthly. At the upper end of the glade bubbled a spring, the waters of which sank into the verdure about it and trickled outward in a dozen tiny rills.

Moh Umzien, throwing off his guns and his scrip, rolled and somersaulted in the grass. Soon, however, the musicians were on their feet again, and called him to go on. No other glades appeared before them, but rank after rank and aisle after aisle of firs. It was impossible to see how much higher the mountain went. Each time he neared what he thought was the top, Moh Umzien saw another expanse towering dimly between the boles.

At length they came to a stream, small but of great strength, smiting the boulders in its steep bed as if to cleave them. Across the brook, the path through the forest still rose, although its slope had become more gradual. The thickness of the trees, which kept the three from seeing far ahead, likewise kept them from realising how high they had climbed, until of a sudden they reached a bare place which was the saddle of the mountain. Here smoothly rounded rocks burst through a wind-tangled mat of long grass, and a single fir, the hardiest of its race, whistled derision, through its dwarfed and twisted branches, at its delicate and graceful brothers down below.

Moh Umzien and the musicians propped their guns against the trunk of this tree and prepared to rest. While the flute-player and the drummer were content to sprawl out in the grass, Moh Umzien climbed the highest of the up-thrust rocks and looked about him in all directions.

To the north and directly below lay the valley of the Beni Bu Nsar, its deep-twisting brook blocked out in the square-sided shadows cast by the terraces; beyond it another mountain, lower than this one and fir-flanked; beyond this a blue haze of mountains made uncertain by the heat of the day; and last of all, sparkling and unmistakable, the Mediterranean.

To the west rose the peak of Tizi Tidighin, the highest mountain north of the Atlas, its top capped with a dazzle of snow. The Atlas itself, beyond Fez and so distant as to look unreal, crawled along in a humped white chain on the southern horizon. Surely, thought Moh Umzien,

one could see the whole world from the mountain over Taghzuth.

Directly below the travellers veered a steep tumble of granite, and through this labyrinth of grey blocks wound a path, so uncertain of direction that one could climb down as easily by picking a new way as by following it. Halfway down and clinging to the slope waved a thin patch of mountain rye. Moh Umzien took off his bandolier, put it on again over his jellaba, and after tucking the skirts of this garment under it, buckled it tight. In this way there would be no flapping cloth to catch and tear in the rocks, and to trip him up. The two musicians, having no cartridge belts, used their turbans instead, so that their braided pigtails, now unconfined, writhed and flapped crazily as they ran downward.

A mad descent this became. Between the boulders, themselves none too steady, stretched a treacherous expanse of finely broken stones which slid and slithered underfoot. Down through the mountain rye they ran, around the corner of a high rock, and drew up panting on the edge of a steeper and solid decline.

Below this cliff they saw for the first time the valley of Taghzuth, with its forking stream, the banks of which were covered with trees bearing many kinds of fruit. On an eminence to the right of them stood the houses of el Kelaa beneath a great grove of sacred fir trees, tall and magnificent, with trunks the girth of a well-fed man. Lower down, at the fork, lay Ulad Ikhalif, the houses of which were made of cribwork interlaid with patches of glistening plaster. Its roofs were neatly shingled, and the open second-story doors Moorish arched. Ulad

Abekar, across the stream, looked much the same. Even more than at Beni Bu Nsar, Moh Umzien was struck by a feeling of antiquity. These buildings reminded him of the mosque which Abd el Mumen had found ready builded in the Vale of Iherrushen, long ago.

After a half-hour's cliff scaling they jumped down onto a road protected on the outer side by a stone wall the height of a man's waist. Branches laden with mulberries hung down over it, and the three travellers quenched their thirst with this fruit as they marched along.

When they came to Ulad Ikhalif, the flute-player said to Moh Umzien: "We are staying here for the night, and the man you are seeking lives in Ulad Abekar, across the stream. Cross the first bridge, and follow the stream path to the right until you come to a grist mill. The mill belongs to the Malim Mohend and his house is right above it."

Having said farewell, Moh Umzien continued on his way. He soon reached the bridge, a lengthy span, wide enough for two men to pass each other safely, and hewn from three logs laid side by side. In the end of each log one could see the square chiselled hole into which withes had been pegged to skid it down the mountain.

On the other side of the bridge Moh Umzien saw a market-place, which, although this was not market day, was not entirely deserted. In one of the booths sat a man writing, and another standing over him was dictating a letter. At Moh Umzien's arrival both men stopped work and looked up. The first to greet him was the scribe, whose long, blanched fingers and sensitive face revealed the calling of schoolmaster.

"Good morning upon you," he said in Arabic.

"May there be no harm unto you," replied Moh Umzien.

"Nor unto you any, my son, praise be to God."

Si Idris the schoolmaster smiled in so kindly a manner that Moh Umzien felt an increase of confidence. The expression and appearance of the other man were not, however, as friendly. A short, stringy creature, blond of beard and with wiry blond hair springing out on wrists and legs, green eyes set deep on either side of a thin, high-arched nose, he looked to be a worse bandit than had Yahya the Left-handed. But when he spoke, his ferocity deserted him. In a high, warbly voice, stuttering over each initial consonant, he asked, in Urriaghli Shillhah, "Who are you and where are you from?"

"Moh Umzien is my name," was the reply, and Moh Umzien tried to speak with the same accent. "There are thousands with the same name, so you can think what you like. Just now I come from Ulad Ikhalif."

"You are from the Gzennaya," asserted the Urriaghli, "and from either Iherrushen or Ikhuanen. I can't tell which until you have spoken further. I know every accent in the Rif."

At this Si Idris the schoolmaster, who understood the Riffian tongue, looked at Moh Umzien more intently, and his gaze, although not offensive, was piercing.

"Are you any kin of the Malim Hamidu, my friend when I was a boy?"

"I am his grandson," replied Moh Umzien quietly. The Urriaghli had already guessed correctly, so it made little difference whether he admitted this or not.

This news delighted the scribe, who said, "Come to my house with me after I have finished this letter."

The Urriaghli sat down on a rock and, with head averted, started running gravel between his fingers.

"Thank you," said Moh Umzien, "but I must finish what I came here for. Afterwards I will accept your hospitality. Please excuse me."

Following the path upstream he came to a mill, a tiny square structure built in every detail the same as the houses. Under it a wooden paddle-turbine turned nosily. Two girls, grinding barley, thrust their heads out when he approached, and quickly drew them in again. So small was the mill that the back of one of them bulged out the door.

Precipitously over the mill stood a large house, or rather a unit of three houses, built on three sides of a square. The central one was large and two-storied, with doors and windows ornately carved from cedar, while the structures on either side were single storied and shaded by verandas.

As Moh Umzien climbed the almost vertical track to the house, the smell of cedar twigs, crackling and blazing in a beehive oven in the open court, made him hungry by the fragrance of their smoke and by the implication of fresh bread; while the quick ring of hammer on steel inside the central house assured him that this was a gunsmith's establishment.

The Malim Mohend stepped out of his shop and straightened up, blinking in the sunlight, a tall and portly patriarch, full cheeked and merry eyed, clad in a cotton tunic yellow with age, the neck of which was hidden by an uncut grisly beard.

"Good morning," said Moh Umzien. "Are you the Malim Mohend?" He added the question merely out of politeness.

"I am, my son, and you are welcome, whoever you may be."

"I am Moh Umzien the son of Mimun the son of the Malim Hamidu, of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. I think you knew my grandfather."

The master of the gunsmiths seized Moh Umzien and kissed him on the forehead. "I knew it the minute I saw you," he exclaimed. "You are like him from the eyes up." The Malim Mohend then turned and called to a boy standing in the doorway: "Ali! bring the pot, the brazier, the tray, and the sugar!"

The craftsman became serious, and started counting on his gnarled fingers, in cracks of which metal-grime was ingrained. "Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty —yes, twenty years have gone by since he came here last. If he is still alive, he must be an old man, for he was bearded when I was a boy."

"He is long since dead, but not from age," said Moh Umzien. "We have had trouble in the Vale of Iherrushen, with our neighbours the Beni Tadmut. We have had a great war, and been exiled to Fez. A few of us, including myself, have moved back. The Hajj Bukkeish was against us, but just now he has turned and holds us in his favour."

"Well he may," replied the Malim Mohend, "since in the time of your grandfather he was tending goats on the mountain."

"We have set aside our grievances," said Moh Umzien. "We have even decided to postpone the reckoning for

our unavenged dead. There is a greater feud ahead of us, which makes the quarrels in the Vale of Iherrushen look like the stone fights of children. We are melting down our teapots, and will shortly send mules back and forth to Beni Mesduy for powder. The feud is with all Christendom."

The master puckered up his lips for a moment, and said: "You are really starting the Jihad?" *

"The Jihad it is," answered Moh Umzien, "and for the moment Bukkeish is our leader. Until we have slaughtered the last of the unbelievers we will act as one family. Every one must join in if we are to succeed."

"The most important thing," said the craftsman, is not that you are fighting the Christians, for that has gone on here and there for a long time; but that you have decided that feuds are no longer needed in the Rif. I know that we poor workers on the bleak mountain, who must buy our barley from the lowlands with the work of our hammers and needles, are not held in great esteem by the Riffians, with their cattle and grain and desperate habit of war.

"But from our height, where the snow and chill winds cool our blood, we have watched the squabbling and the warring to the east of us. Indeed, little sense as we saw in it, we have turned it to our advantage, as did your grandfather. Until the Mauser came in, and the Remington, great store was held by the rifles of Taghzuth. Our gunsmiths grew fat on the wars in the Rif."

At this point Si Idris the schoolmaster came in and sat unobtrusively in a corner.

* The Jihad is the Holy War against Christians, the Mohammedan equivalent of Crusade.

"Si Idris," cried the Malim Mohend, "do you know who this young man is?"

"I do," replied the scribe, "and foolishly revealed my knowledge to his enemy."

"That makes no difference," said Moh Umzien. "He guessed my country anyway, and furthermore, my errand here is no secret."

"What is all this about?" asked the Malim Mohend.

"A certain Taher the Ferret from the Aith Mohend n Nyemna of the Beni Urriaghel—" started Si Idris.

"That is the family we were fighting when the trouble with the Beni Tadmut began," interrupted Moh Umzien. "Now I see. Go on, excuse me, tell us what he was doing."

"He came here to buy scrips to sell in his tribe. He doesn't say so openly, but he is buying them for the army of Abd el Krim at Ajdir, who is fighting the Spaniards. When Moh Umzien came over the bridge I was just finishing a letter for him. A man is leaving for Targuist at noon, and the Urriaghli wanted him to carry it, to be handed over at Targuist to another bound for Ajdir."

"To whom was the letter addressed?"

"To Sidi Mohammed ben Abd el Krim."

"Did he refer directly to buying the scrips for him?"

"No, but he mentioned that he had bought forty, and said that he could not yet tell about the other matters. What these were he did not confide in me."

"I think I can explain it," said Moh Umzien. "Since Abd el Krim has been firing on the island at Ajdir, and has kept the Spaniards from landing on the mainland, he has use not only for scrips but for other things as well. I have heard that he and his Ajdir company are plan-

ning a sally against the foe in Temsaman. Doubtless he has the same idea as Bukkeish in regard to Taghzuth, but his messenger arrived the earlier.

"Bukkeish is no small plotter like the Urriaghli, but is thinking of the whole Rif, which he wishes to unite, and he hopes to form a single council of all the tribes to govern it in the way most effectively to drive out the Christians. Abd el Krim's ambition is to set himself up over all the Riffians as a sultan, and to raise his kinsmen to high offices. But so far, at least, he has done no more than the people of Ajdir have been doing for a generation."

"Did you say that it would be the Jihad, against all Christendom?" asked Si Idris mildly.

"Bukkeish knows little of all Christendom," replied Moh Umzien. "It is only the Christians who bother us with whom we are now concerned. But without doubt the others are in alliance with them, so that it will make little difference. These are things, Si Idris, of which you know more than do I."

"While working at Rabat and at Casablanca," the schoolmaster modestly admitted, "I was able to study them and their ways. You will find that all Christians are not alike, although most people believe them all struck on a single die."

"There are differences between the Spanish and the French," said Moh Umzien. "That I have seen for myself. The Spaniards are poor people and work with their hands, yet they throw money about like barley at a wedding. Despite this they are the choice children of Satan."

"In that you are wrong," said Si Idris. "I have had

dealings with both and know. The Spaniard may hit you and twist your thumbs, but he will not cheat you, while the Frenchman is worse than a Jew. Indeed, I am often tempted to believe them of a single tribe.

"But there are other Christians yet whom you may not have seen. There are, for example, the English . . ."

"I saw some in Fez," interrupted Moh Umzien, "tall and severe, like the men of Beni Amart. Their women wore coarse clothing and took long steps. You are right, they differ from either of the others."

"The English," continued Si Idris, "are like the Riffians. They are sharp but they are honest. They do not make loud noises nor wave their arms in the street. It is said that their time of heathendom is not far past—the worm of Christianity has eaten no deeper than their clothing.

"Then there are the Germans whom one used to see before the French defeated them, huge men, strong, pleasing toward Muslimin, cleverer than any of the rest, and our friends. Only one other kind approaches them in decency, and that is the Americans, who, like the English and Germans, possess that un-Christian quality of shame. Also they give to the poor and to the blind, in which respect they are unique. They are always laughing and joking, like ourselves. The Frenchmen, seeing them walk down the street laughing, become disdainful and mutter against them. It is because they are jealous; their brains are curdled with avarice and they cannot laugh.

"Tell Bukkeish, if he does not know it already, that he should fight none but the Spaniards, and, if necessary, the French. The French are many and clever, but

mostly cowards. They have the most money and the best arms, and make others fight for them. Try not to fight them until you have to. The English, the Germans, and the Americans all like to see a plucky fight, and you may get some help from them, if you go about it in the right way."

"Where is the country of the Americans?" asked Moh Umzien.

"I have heard on reliable authority," said Si Idris the schoolmaster, "that it lies between Morocco and Mekka, somewhat nearer the latter place. A pilgrim once told me that he had passed through it on the way."

"It is strange," said Moh Umzien, "that my father, who was a pilgrim, never mentioned it. But he was very young and perhaps has forgotten. Perhaps Bukkeish will send a messenger to slaughter a bull in their mosque, so that they will join us."

The three sat in silence a while, and Moh Umzien said to the Malim Mohend: "You know by now why I have come here, but yet it is my duty to explain it and to deliver Bukkeish's letter. Bukkeish wants Taghzuthi men to go back with me to Tiddest, to refill and reslug old cartridges, to mend disabled guns, and to do whatever skilful task is needed. These men will not be asked to fight. Do you think that you can persuade forty or fifty to go?"

"Ali!" called the Malim Mohend to his son, who was watching the women at the oven, now fragrant with the smell of bread, "go fetch the sheikhs of el Kelaa, Ulad el Wartith, Ulad Ikhalif, and Tezarin. Tell them to come here at once, that a council is to be held and cannot be

delayed. Take your brother with you, and let him go to some villages and you to others."

About nightfall the sheikhs began to arrive. First came he of Ulad Ikhalif, a gentle man with a thin beard and bulging forehead; next the sheikh of Ulad el Wartith, a long bony man with a bonier face, and black eyes glittering wildly under their roof-like ridges. This feature, combined with his disjointed gait, gave him an external appearance of insanity.

Then entered the sheikh who at the same time commanded Tezarin and Targamzith, downstream. He was a short, black-bearded man, square of shoulder and of forehead. With him was the sheikh of far Teririn, who had not been expected because of the distance of his village. Last of all to arrive was one with a blunt face, reddish, as if it had just been bruised, and with an upturned nose and protruding jaws. He was the sheikh of el Kelaa. Si Idris the schoolmaster, sitting in the corner next to Moh Umzien, whispered: "He is the best of all, although his face is bad."

The Malim Mohend acted as presiding officer. He outlined the ambitions of the Hajj Bukkeish, and read them his letter. He pleaded that the fight was in earnest, and that the men of Taghzuth should give aid. His demand was met in a variety of ways.

The sheikh of Tezarin was the first to answer. "Today I have talked with a man of Beni Urriaghel who makes a similar request. He wants leatherworkers and gunsmiths from Tezarin and Targamzith to enter the service of Abd el Krim."

"What did you tell him?" asked the Malim Mohend.

"I told him to wait until to-morrow morning for an answer."

"Then refuse," said the sheikh of el Kelaa. "It is better to send our men under Bukkeish's protection than under that of the Urriaghlis. I have learned of old not to trust them."

"I," said the mad-looking sheikh of Ulad el Wartith, "do not see why we should send any. The Spaniards will never get over these mountains to harm Taghzuth."

"That opinion," interrupted Si Idris in some heat, "is an unworthy one and should be forgotten. I have seen the French building roads over mountains as high as this. They say they are building one now over the Tizi Tishka in the Atlas, which is many times as high and steep as our mountains here. If the French can do that, so can the Spaniards, for all Christians borrow their tricks from the same source. Once the Spaniards break through the Rif, they will have little trouble crossing the mountains, especially, sheikh, if all of us are as listless as you.

"It is hard to realise, up here in high valleys where the lowland noises seldom reach, that things are changing, and are even now not what they were a year ago. We are like birds sleeping in a nest in a high tree, while a woodman chops the trunk away fathoms below. We must join one side or the other, and let there be no doubt of our choice."

Si Idris's argument destroyed the opposition still lurking in the minds of the sheikhs. He of Ulad el Wartith flushed a leathery red and pulled his feet tightly under him. Before another half hour had passed, plans had been made for forty men to leave with Moh Umzien before dawn the next day.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MESSAGE FROM ABD EL KRIM

Across the plain which stretches to the other side of the Kert the sun shone mercilessly bright. Vapours being sucked out of a land already hard and dry danced and shimmered, making the humped backs of the black tents of the Metalsa seem to wave and wriggle as if in a small wind. The houses of el Azib of Meidhar, mud-roofed and ugly, teemed and resounded with men. The hand-adzed doors creaked and scraped with being constantly opened and closed. On the slope of the mountain behind the village dozens of cook-fires impelled their streamers of smoke sharply upward, and brown-cloaked men crouched on the browner earth before them, gingerly turning wire spitfuls of meat. White steam, here and there, rushing out of kettle spouts, frosted the grey smoke as it rose upward.

Down by the river an Arab deserter from the French Tirailleurs was drilling a squad of mountain men of the Beni Tuzin, tall, red-elbowed and awkward, with short golden stubble glinting on their tanned and ruddy cheeks. Elsewhere the mujahidin * lay about under the few olive trees, in the shade of walls and behind the angles of houses, cleaning their guns and braiding sandals out of bundles of halfa. In an ugly tin-roofed shack a Jew

* *Mujahidin* are holy warriors, the Mohammedan counterpart of Crusaders.

from Mestassa, ill-disguised in Riffian clothes, was selling sugar and cigarettes.

Such was the camp of the Hajj Bukkeish, three thousand men, as nearly as one could judge their numbers, the nucleus of them Gzennaya from Tiddest and the Vale of Iherrushen, with a generous number of Beni Amart, a few mountain Urriaghlis, and some mountain Beni Tuzin. Moh Umzien and his forty Taghzuthi craftsmen had not yet arrived.

In an ill-lighted room, its walls mouldy and devoid of plaster, sat the Hajj Bukkeish on a halfa mat, flanked by a dozen scribes. He was receiving the enlistment of new arrivals, and sending them to the arsenal with orders for rifles and ammunition. Those recruits at the moment giving their names to the scribes were Beni Tuzin men, and men whose homes were in Tafersit, now occupied by the Spanish, and who wished to have a part in the winning back of them.

As each man entered Bukkeish scrutinised him carefully and exchanged a few words with him before letting him pass on to the scribes. This task of registering new enlistments was not as simple as it might have been in another army. Here were men fresh from the hills, their mountain feuds lurking in the air they breathed. They had not discarded their unconscious habit of looking about from the corners of their eyes on the chance of discovering the presence of enemies. It was essential that Bukkeish should place each man in that company in which he would be least likely to make trouble.

Bursting through the line of recruits ran a man who bore every evidence of having just completed a long or rapid journey. The messenger drew a much-folded sheet

of paper from between his newly shaven temple and his turban. The letter was soggy from the sweat of his running.

Bukkeish took the letter, and announced: "You recruits who have not yet been listed go outside and supply yourselves with halfa grass from the storehouse to the right."

He turned to the scribe nearest the door, and said: "Mulud, go with them and order the storekeeper to give it to them. Let each man braid himself a stout pair of sandals for to-morrow. No leather slippers will be allowed, and no one may go barefoot."

Turning to the messenger, he asked: "From whom is your message?"

"From Sidi Mohammed ben Abd el Krim."

Bukkeish opened the letter, and handing it to the scribe nearest him, bade him read it.

"Praise be unto the Only God," chanted the scribe in a high monotone. "There will be nothing but His Power, nothing but our love for God, He who is Just unto us; therefore read this as if mine eyes were before you, and all creation shall see that justice be done between you and between us. And may there be a bond and a seal between you and between us, into the hour of eternity. May God cause your heart to be pleased with our hearts, and may we both cast aside all jealousy and hate. And let us leave only God between you and between us. Now peace is willed to you by Sidi Mohammed ben Abd el Krim, and may peace be unto you and it a great peace. Now shall I reveal something to Sidi el Hajj Bukkeish. I request you to send some men at once to our camp beneath the Mountain of the Baran, since the Christian is

surrounded on the flank of the mountain, and we need many men wherewith to rout him out. Please send these men for the sake of the countenance of God and not for my countenance's sake, since you and I are but Children of Adam alike. There have died four thousand of the foe and two thousand still remain, hungry and without water. They are becoming mad from thirst and are soon likely to burst down hill to slake it. We fear that our men are not numerous enough to hold them once they have commenced their descent. It is for this that we need men wherewith to fill our trenches at the foot of the mountain. I have revealed this unto you now, and may the peace remain. I have written this unto you. Sidi Mohammed ben Abd el Krim."

The monotone ceased abruptly, leaving a silence which the Hajj Bukkeish did not break for some time.

"Mulud," said he after a period of deliberation, during which his forehead rested on a gnarled red hand, "go to the camping place of the Beni Amart and bring me the Captain Ayad and the Captain Misaud."

A few minutes later Mulud, coming to the door again, stood back from it to let enter the captains of the Beni Amart. The first to pass was Ayad, a tall man who was forced to bend low in order to get through the doorway; when he straightened up and crossed the room he walked with a marked limp which led one to notice that his left leg was distorted from an old break, and less developed than its mate. Flat-templed, blue-eyed, and black of eyebrow and scant, close-cropped beard, his long face reflected a nobility which made one forget his deformity. Misaud, close after him, had no need to stoop; he was a quadroon, one of the blacksmith breed

who had risen to office in spite of all prejudice and through bravery and strategy.

Short, sturdy, with a round brown face and rounder muscles to his calves, he followed his companion across the room and squatted respectfully just off the mat, while Ayad, with a confidence derived from better birth, sat at the left of the leader himself, with his good knee up and his bad knee down, his rifle in his right hand, and looking ready to leap up at any moment. His manner of sitting was known to Bukkeish and overlooked. Ayad's life had been a constant series of family battles, and he owed his existence to this watchfulness which had now become an unconscious habit.

Bukkeish turned to Abd el Krim's messenger, and said: "Go to the guard house, the building on the right of this one, and you will be given food and tea, and a mat to rest on. Wait there until I send for you to carry back an answer."

Turning to the scribes, he bade them also depart, and when he was alone with the two captains of the Beni Amart, and after a sentry had been posted at the door, he commenced:

"I have just received a letter from Abd el Krim. He says that his men have surrounded the Spaniards on the Mountain of the Baran, but that he fears he cannot hold them if once they burst down for water. He wants reinforcements, allies. He has proposed an alliance with me. I can see no reason why his sincerity in the Jihad should be doubted.

"His sincerity toward me is another thing. We must give him a trial before we can place any confidence in him. His words are too studied. Yet he needs men, and

we should supply them. If, however, I send Gzennaya men, it is quite probable that he will find some way of having them suffer the most and derive the least credit for it. He may betray them entirely for his own purposes. How would it be if one of you were to lead him three hundred of your men from Beni Amart? Do you think he would treat them any differently from his own?"

To this question the Captain Ayad replied, without hesitation and without changing his seemingly uncomfortable position: "I think that you will be wise to withhold the Gzennaya men, and I don't think that he would dare mistreat those from our tribe. He is anxious to conciliate our tribesmen and win them over to his allegiance. Any unfairness on the Mountain of the Baran would be told at home and ruin his hopes there, and he knows it. We have a hundred men here who can go, and Misaud can raise another two hundred over night."

"I will do that," said Misaud, "if you desire it. I am not afraid of being cheated by the old rug-seller, Abd el Krim. If you give me orders to leave now, I will do so, and will have three hundred men at the Mountain of the Baran by to-morrow noon."

"I think that Ayad had better stay here with me," said Bukkeish. "I need help in planning the attack."

"If you mean that you are keeping me as a hostage so that my men will not change over to Abd el Krim's side, you need not worry," said Ayad. "There is no chance of that at all."

"Oh, no," said Bukkeish, trying, in his clumsy way, to look surprised. "I never thought of that. I trust your men completely."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STRAY DONKEY

That night Moh Umzien was squatting before a blazing fire of broken boxes left behind by the Spaniards, his hands and thighs too hot for comfort and his back too cold. After having delivered the Taghzuthi craftsmen to Bukkeish, he had joined his own kinsmen. Among them crouched Si Alush the schoolmaster, with his thin nose and gentle eyes, and Athemran the Fat, Zughdud the Skinny, and Bu Shkort, whose head was shaped like hands folded in prayer. These were men of the Ulad Abd el Mumen who had returned to the Vale of Iherrushen with Mimun the son of the Malim Hamidu when he had led a fat ram to the mosque of Tiddest and had slaughtered it, and who had survived the siege after which Moh Umzien had been sent to Inhanahan, and who had now, against their own wills, joined Bukkeish, in accordance with the advice of Si Alush and of Moh Umzien. The light striking the cheeks of Athemran the Fat was reflected as on a kidskin full of oil, and the firmer features of the others stood out in clear relief.

All around them gleamed fires like their own, some flaring and others low, some heating water in tea-kettles, and others, like that of Moh Umzien and his companions, being used only for warmth and cheer. The Spaniards had left el Azib of Meidhar quickly, while Moh

Umzien had been at Taghzuth, and they had left behind them not only such debris as these boxes, but also a certain quantity of ammunition, of tinned food, and a number of their dead. Beside these things they had left the motionless skeletons of the three airplanes which Shaib had destroyed; and his name was on the tongues of many.

From Tafersit to the north, over the flank of a low hill, twinkled the fires of the enemy, bright, but not much larger looking than the great company of stars overhead, which, in the clear air of the waste land, seemed to the mountain men more numerous and more important than they had ever before appeared.

Through the heavy stillness of the plain there broke an occasional noise. A shot from a sentry's rifle, as likely at a hedgehog as at a man, the answering patter from the Spanish lines, fired without direction and almost without purpose, the nerve-tingling wail of a jackal, prolonging itself until it shivered and broke, like the shattering of a meteor. These noises, the chill smell of the desert wind, and the thought of the morrow's battle, sobered the men and made the rings of fire more comforting than ever.

From the outermost fires at the northern end of the camp there arose a great gust of laughter, laughter which spread from one circle to the next, and which had already begun to subside at the point of its start before it had reached the fire of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. A man from a neighbouring circle appeared in the glow, and pushed himself between Si Alush and Zughdud the Skinny.

"Hearken," said he, "to what has happened. A man

from this village had been on sentry duty all day, on the Metalsa side, and when he was relieved and went back to his house, he found that his donkey had strayed northward through the Spanish lines. He left his rifle and bandolier behind him and walked, unarmed, to find his donkey. When he passed our lines he explained to the picket what he was after, and walked on toward the Spanish lines as calmly as if he were going to the mosque. Soon he came to a Spaniard lying against a rock.

" 'Halt!' cried the picket, 'who passes?'

" 'Only I,' replied the man, 'looking for a donkey that has strayed. My wife says that he wandered in this direction. Have you by any chance seen one, a white one with a pack sore on its neck?'

" 'I have,' said the picket, nodding his head low upon his chest, 'and not long ago, either. I threw a stone at it as it passed. Come into camp and tell your story to the Commandant and perhaps you will get it back.'

"The man was surprised at this friendliness, but soon saw the reason for it. The picket tried to stand up on his feet, but could not. He was drunk.

" 'If you want me to take you to the Commandant,' said he, 'you must help me along. These cartridges and this rifle are too heavy for me to carry.'

" 'Then let me carry them for you,' said the man from el Azib, and he took them and slung them over his shoulder. He then helped the sentry along with a hand under the armpit. Around the side of the hill he saw his donkey looking at him through some cactus, so he seized its bridle-rope, and letting the Spaniard fall, killed him with his own bayonet. Thus he gained not only his beast but

a Mauser and two hundred cartridges besides, and the Key to Paradise."

This tale, appealing as it did to the Riffians' humour, set the whole camp into a new mood. The chill and pensive silence of a moment ago had disappeared as if by magic.

"What is this stuff, this wine?" asked Moh Umzien of Si Alush.

"It is the juice of grapes, squeezed out and left to stand for a long while. While it is standing it rots and evil spirits enter it. Christians drink it, and the evil enters them and makes them weak and foolish, and easy to kill."

From one fire close by wavered the shrill and piercing disharmonies of Riffian pipes, and from another rose the shouted undulations of a martial song. Quatrain after quatrain they sang, more joining in at every line; the piper, invisible though omnipresent, quickly altering his skirl to match the song.

Thus they passed the greater part of the night, the sentries punctuating the stanzas with volleys. To-morrow would be for many of them their first fight with the Christian, indeed their first close sight of him, and it was no night for a man to sleep in.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WAR IN THE EAST

In the morning Bukkeish smote Tafersit as he had planned. Before the sun had risen out of the flat, low east, the Riffian picket line had swelled until it had become almost a solid line of crouching men, their colour the same as that of the rocks behind which they hid. This line, climbing half way up the mountain to the west, thinned out in the east until it became as scattered as an ordinary string of sentries. Moh Umzien and his kinsmen were in the centre of it.

As the Riffians commenced firing, the Spanish outposts were seen to wriggle backwards toward the town. They apparently had no intention of fighting it out in the open. The Riffians advanced, keeping in what shelter the rocks afforded them, all traces of order gone with the first rifle crack, and each man thinking of what he himself should do and of the Paradise which would greet him should he die in battle.

Not until the Riffians came within machine-gun range of the houses did they suffer any casualties. The pattering of these weapons, swivelled clumsily through the narrow slits of the second stories, showed that the attackers had been wise to scatter and to fight in their customary fashion.

The nearest house of the village was a great two-storied stone hulk with tiny triangular windows, and

about the house ran a chin-high wall covered in front with cactus. The men of Tafersit had built a strong box to resist their own attack. On the edge of the wall empty cartridge cases had been set up, between which appeared rifles and portions of men's faces. These gaps in the cases became the especial target of the Ulad Abd el Mumen and of the men near them. Moh Umzien, crouching behind a rock, took deliberate aim each time he fired, and counted eight hits.

"That for Bukkeish," he muttered as he saw the first face topple backward, with blood spurting from its neck; "that for the schoolmaster of Beni Tadmut," as he hit the second in the cheek; and so on through the catalogue of his enemies. It was fine sport, and soon the wall was rid of its defenders.

The machine gun was harder to squelch, since the slit in the wall was so narrow. This narrowness, however, limited its sidewise range, and the attackers lost no time in learning just how far this extended. Moh Umzien and his men crawled behind rocks and hummocks toward the mountain, until they were out of reach of the machine gun, and had come into rifle-shot range of those of the wall-defenders who had abandoned their position and had re-established themselves on the side and rear of the fort.

Although this attack on the roundhouse was the centre of the fighting, it did not by any means constitute all of it. The other houses of Tafersit, being ordinary dwellings, were defended from doorways and from roofs, on which temporary barricades had been set up. On the plainward flank the Spaniards had taken up positions in

holes and on mounds, and around them hot individual combats were being waged.

During the siege of the roundhouse, while Moh Umzien and those with him were engaged in sniping at the defenders of the side wall, a buzzing arose over the less regular detonations of the firing, and grew gradually louder and louder. Moh Umzien looked up, and saw a plane approaching from the east. He nudged Si Alush, who was crouching beside him.

"Look!" said the schoolmaster of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, "it has only one wing! That is the worst kind; it flies fastest and carries the most bombs!"

The Riffians, whose gun barrels were for the most part too hot for shooting and had to be handled gingerly, looked up and saw the dread mechanism swooping down in wide spirals, almost overhead. As the plane descended it opened fire with a machine gun from the cockpit, and dropped bombs which detonated with a noise eclipsing any that had gone before.

Bukkeish's men, realising the futility of fighting while the plane flew over them, cut for shelter. On the side of the mountain several hundred yards away were earthen dugouts hewn by the men of Tafersit for such occasions as this. Bukkeish's men approached them on the run, and a number fell in so doing. Moh Umzien and his men ran to the nearest, and started in. Peering into the darkness, he saw it to be full of women and children.

Moh Umzien became embarrassed. "Keep out of there," he ordered, "that is no place for soldiers."

The men dropped to the ground and crawled between stones and under bushes. All began sniping at the plane,

which was now flying dangerously low, ploughing up a wavy furrow in the ground with angular machine-gun fire. One of the Ulad Abd el Mumen had a flintlock. Si Alush the schoolmaster snatched this from him, and crammed the barrel half full of powder, dropping a ball on top of it. He braced the stock against a stone and fired. It was a direct hit; the motor stopped suddenly, and the plane, a moment later, burst into flames. Down it shot at the angle at which it had been firing, and gliding like a rocket crashed into the front of the roundhouse.

At this Moh Umzien and his men rose up with great shouting, and the others did likewise. They ran toward the fort, firing at full speed from between the hip and armpit, after the manner of fantasia riders.

"Faith of Mohammed!" some one cried, and soon all were shouting it, the ancient call of the Jihad, ringing forth in terrifying volume over the crash of rifle fire.

The impact of the smash had knocked down the loose stones over the machine-gun slit, and as the advancing mob came to the wall they saw the Spaniards running in great disorder out of a gate in the back of it. The Riffians ran to this gate, led by the Ulad Abd el Mumen, and some pursued those who were fleeing, engaging in hand-to-hand combats, and killing many with knives. Moh Umzien, Si Alush the schoolmaster, and a half dozen others dashed through the gate and up the narrow stairs from the courtyard into the second story. They found eight men crouching in terror in a corner.

Moh Umzien drew his knife, and the others did likewise.

"It is like slaughtering goats," said Si Alush the schoolmaster.

As they stabbed the men they muttered, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful."

They jerked the machine-gun out of its fallen orifice, and picking a hole in the opposite wall of the room with their knives, for the masonry was without mortar, they thrust the muzzle which had so short a time before been their target through the new gap, and commenced firing at the Regulares barricaded on the neighbouring roofs. Another squad of Riffians had meanwhile taken the machine-gun out of the burning plane, and finding it still serviceable, had mounted it on the wall near the gate.

Soon it became apparent that the Spaniards did not intend to defend the place any longer. Those embattled on the roofs had become skeleton guards, of but two or three men each, with a dozen guns apiece, firing one rifle and then another to give the impression of large numbers, and to cover up a retreat.

The Spanish soldiers streamed out of the town in great disorder, flinging their guns from them, their packs, their jackets even, and the ridiculous brimless caps which they wore. They did not follow any one road but ran like men stricken, across the stony desert and through the thorny bushes, leaving tatters of their trousers legs behind them, and gobbets of blood.

Naught could contain the Riffian soldiery at this sight. The town was theirs, it was full of ammunition, and of food—even of wine, which few of them had tasted. Of these things, however, none of them at present thought. Where a Spaniard had fallen a Riffian

would pause to pick off his bandolier, or if his own gun were too hot, to change arms with a corpse; but for nothing else did they hesitate. Charging ahead, hoarse and dry of lips, their pigtails streaming behind them and extra halfa sandals jostling in their hoods, many would cry: "I have not yet killed a Christian! I have not yet killed a Christian! May the gates of Paradise open this day!"

In the front of the charge ran Bukkeish, outstripping many of the younger and lither men, sweat streaming from his massive temples, and his red beard sprawling across the top of the old torn jellaba which he wore in battle. No insignia distinguished him from his men.

On the way to Dar Driush stood the small village of Ababda, and here the Spaniards attempted to make a stand. Those who were defending it, however, had been infected by the despair of those whom they had seen flee past them, and did not lose much time in joining the frantic throng, after a few uncertain volleys. While others of the Riffians ran ahead after their quarry, Bukkeish with a few of his guard entered the largest house in Ababda, to see that no one should hide there. In the far corner of the room stood a Spanish officer leaning over a wire field cot, on which lay a heavily bandaged man.

The doctor, for such he was, turned around and made a motion with his hand to his lips, whispering in Arabic: "Be quiet, please. This man is badly wounded and loud talk close by will kill him."

"Come outside," ordered Bukkeish, lowering his voice almost to a whisper.

"Peace be upon you," said the doctor, with a wry smile, outside the door.

"And upon you be the Peace," replied Bukkeish, somewhat taken aback. At this the leader cleared his throat and spoke in his normal tone. "You know, do you not, that you are a prisoner?"

"I know that," said the doctor. "What am I to do?"

Bukkeish had never seen such a Christian. Even he was impressed by the man's candour and lack of concern for his own life.

"Go back in your hospital," replied the captor. "You will stay there and care for such wounded as are brought to you. Be they Muslimin or Christians, you will heal them all the same."

"Of course," said the doctor, "we are all sons of Adam alike."

As Bukkeish turned to go onward he muttered to himself: "God willing the other who has said those words will be as easy to deal with as is he."

Rushing past Ababda where Bukkeish had paused to enter the hospital, the mujahidin kept on, spurred by the distant sight of the ramparts of Dar Driush. Now on the left wing of the fan-shaped van, the Ulad Abd el Mumen kept those stragglers who were too exhausted to flee in the direction of safety from heading northward into the hills of Temsaman and Beni Said, where they might find temporary hiding in high stands of maize and in crevices between rocks.

Moh Umzien was weary but refused to yield to the urgings of his body. With Si Alush the schoolmaster, who was sweating profusely, he kept forward at a trot.

At length they came to a field, on the edge of which stood two haycocks, rounded and held down with stone-weighted ropes. Moh Umzien glanced at these haycocks and then looked back again. The top of one of them was askew, and overhung one side. The rope which hung over the concavity was swinging gently back and forth, its terminal stone passing through a small arc.

Moh Umzien drew his dagger and walked around the stack, thrusting his blade in to the hilt from all directions. He concentrated on the places where the hay looked disturbed, which formed a zone a third of the way down from the top. When he stabbed the concavity, a shrill scream of pain issued from the hay, and the top of the pile moved.

The Ulad Abd el Mumen pulled the hay off with the muzzles of their guns. Soon they struck flesh, and louder screams were heard. A small Spaniard tumbled to the ground, and lay there weeping. He crawled to Moh Umzien's legs and the latter, seizing him by the collar, pulled him to his feet.

The Spaniard was a boy who had not yet reached puberty. From his childish lips came frantic soprano pleadings, and tears flowed over his cheeks. His clothing was in shreds, and blood flowed from one thigh where Moh Umzien had pricked him. His feet, too, were bloody, their soles lacerated by sharp stones through worn-out rope sandals.

Si Alush looked at him in great pity.

"I should take him home and put him in school at the mosque," said he. "He is not yet too old for the bile of Christianity to be expelled from him."

Moh Umzien took the boy's face in his hand, pressing

the wet cheeks between thumb and forefinger. He turned the prisoner's head toward the north, and pointed in that direction with his other hand.

"Run!" he cried in Shillhah.

This order needed no interpreting. As the boy was starting, Moh Umzien saw the end of a cord hanging from his pocket. Moh Umzien reached out and snatched at this. He found himself holding a string of nostrils and ears, clotted and old. He dropped it quickly.

"Nasty child!" said Si Alush.

A shot rang out somewhere from among the Ulad Abd el Mumen, and the Spaniard fell.

It had grown dark before the van of the mujahidin had reached the stout earthen wall which surrounds the post of Dar Driush. No native village was this, but a strong place reared for fighting, and Bukkeish, who with his remarkable strength and endurance had come up to the front again, saw that it was not to be taken as easily as Tafersit, unless the panic of the flight from that place had softened the bones of the defenders.

The Spanish rank and file, brave men by nature if small and ill fed, had tasted enough of this war with the Riffians, and most of them wished only to go home. Neither the stoutness of the ramparts of Dar Driush, nor its strength of armament, could make any difference in the outcome of the impending combat. It had been Bukkeish's day, and it would be Bukkeish's night. To his own men and to the Spaniards as well, he seemed predestined to win.

The raging and shouting oncomers ran to the very wall itself and shot over it. Such a fire of faith, such

an utter disregard for life, had seldom been achieved since the days of the Prophet Mohammed himself, whose name all were shouting.

No Arabs were they, yet their momentary flare of religion was as great as that of any desert puritan, for their fervour was all the greater for its inconsistency. Habitual breakers of truces and fasts, they now thought of Paradise and of as high a toll of Christians as possible before entering there. They were heathen to the core when it came to quiet things, but when it came time to think of dying they were Muslimin one and all.

Such a battle as raged there that night! Men straining to pick up heavy stones and casting them at the mud wall time and again to make a hole in it, men scrambling atop this wall to fall over backwards with slugs through their faces, men climbing on each other's shoulders and leaping over, slashing before them with knives until they fell—no defenders on earth could have lasted much longer.

About three in the morning the rear gates of the great enclosure opened and a train puffed out, forcing all the steam it could into its pistons and chugging down the narrow-gauge track to Tistutin. Although a number of the men who lay scrambled on the flat cars were killed by sniping before they had been drawn out of rifle-shot, the train itself and most of its occupants escaped.

"They shall not do that again," cried Bukkeish, chagrined that he had not prepared for this. "Cut the tracks and throw the rails far away. But do not cut them here where they can see you. Let us draw them out and get the gates open again. Go down the road out of sight and cut them there. Do not make much

stir about it, so that they will not know we have thought of it."

A half dozen men disappeared down the tracks, and now and then the clanging of metal on metal could be heard at intervals of rifle-fire.

About five in the morning the Spaniards made another sally. By this time the Riffians had entirely surrounded the place and were firing from positions only a few yards away from the gate, and practically on the tracks, but such was the desperation of those breaking out that they did not care. The gates opened with a harsh scraping, and out rushed another engine. The Riffians drew aside as if in great alarm, and let it pass unscathed.

Although the sun had not yet risen, there was sufficient light for those near the fort to see what happened. The train bowled down the slight incline at a great rate, and when it had gone a half a mile or so the engine leaped to the left and burrowed its nose in the loose gravel of the plain. The flat cars behind it piled and humped, crackling like pine in a fire, and men were tossed in the air in every direction. At the same moment a barrage of fire from either side of the tracks completed the destruction.

Before the defenders had a chance to shut the gates, a dozen or more Riffians had torn them from their hinges, and the mob rushed in, shouting, stabbing, shooting, striking with the butts of their guns when the barrels were too hot; and what few defenders remained, those of them who escaped the immediate fury of the onrush, after an hour or more of hand-to-hand fighting, found themselves prisoners.

Tistutin lay quite a distance down the track, and the

men were tired from a day and a night of continual fighting. Their fatigue came upon them suddenly now that they had stopped. Although most of them would gladly have gone on and beleaguered that place, which was larger than Dar Driush—a walled enclosure, with two gates for the railroad tracks to pass through, and twenty Spanish-built houses in it—Bukkeish called a halt.

To take Tistutin would require fresh men whose nerves had had time to recuperate from the strain they had just passed through. Also, there were many wounded who needed attention, and the stock of captured ammunition must be brought together and distributed. Another thought too which influenced him was that Abd el Krim should before long have finished his work at the Mountain of the Baran, and should be down to help him. A day's delay would not be enough to allow the Spaniards to gather reinforcements.

Bukkeish established another hospital in Dar Driush, and set his doctor in it. The latter worked with a detached zeal, and when by noon he had cared for a hundred or more men, the blankets stretched out over the floors of the several houses he had commandeered were covered with many Christian wounded as well as with Riffians. Some of the Spaniards were sitting up in their blankets, smoking and offering cigarettes to their Riffian neighbours. Several of the Riffians accepted them, but did not know how to smoke. It amused both Spaniards and Riffians to see them choke and sputter.

Bukkeish, when he could snatch a moment from the listing of captured supplies, walked through the rooms, his old brown jellaba flapping in torn folds about his

thighs, and his spare sandals still dangling from his neck. He bent over to talk with those who were most seriously wounded, and attempted to talk lightly to cheer them up. At this, however, he was not proficient. His visits were prompted more by a desire to take stock of things than by sympathy.

Just before noon when the army, squatting about inside and outside the enclosure, was cooking the contents of hundreds of looted tin cans on fires made from tables and chairs, a small cloud of dust arose to the north from the direction of Ben Tyeb. This dust, in a quarter of an hour, resolved itself into the shapes of men, marching in little order but withal rapidly and lustily.

At the head of them sat a broad-shouldered man mounted upon a great white horse. As they drew near sounds from them smote the camp, harsh shouts from hoarse throats and cracked lips, songs rising and falling in great confusion, and over all the blood-hastening skirling of pipes.

Bukkeish came out to meet them, and the Schoolmaster, for such was Abd el Krim called by his men in the early days of the war, dismounted with some difficulty from his heavy stallion. On the ground, he became a little man. Broad was he in every dimension, of hip, of shoulder, of cheekbone, and of forehead; overfat from lack of exercise, long nosed and crafty of eye—he looked more like a silk merchant of Fez than the commander of an army of Riffians. One leg, broken in his fall while escaping from a prison tower outside Melilla, caused him to be continually shifting his posture while standing on the ground.

After the salutations were over, Bukkeish inquired:

"Did all go as you had expected on the Mountain of the Baran?"

"Yes," replied the Schoolmaster. "All of them are dead. We counted over six thousand corpses on the slope and in the vale by the tomb of Sidi Misaud ed-Derkawi. Their general, Silvestre, his name was, shot himself with his own automatic."

"He was a Christian who understood shame," said Bukkeish, as the two of them walked slowly into the room Bukkeish had taken over for his headquarters; two broad-built men, one tall and craggy, the other short and sleek.

CHAPTER XXIX

ALLIANCE

There were four of them who ate together that noon, Bukkeish, Abd el Krim, the Captain Ayad, and the Captain Misaud, who had borne himself valorously at the Mountain of the Baran. Until the meal had been finished all of them kept silence, and only when Ayad commenced making tea over a brazier of glowing charcoal did they speak.

"I have received your letter," said Bukkeish, "and you have received my reply. I see no need for repeating the overtures, or for going through the formalities of alliance. I have no ox with me to sacrifice, and I saw none travelling in your procession. The words of two men with a common war in hand should be enough security."

Bukkeish said this slowly, the massive angles of his jaw and cheekbone, illumined into even sharper relief by the sheen of the brazier, moving deliberately with each syllable.

"That is the truth of God," replied the Schoolmaster with less deliberation, for his was a more facile mind than that of his rival.

"We both have men, and we both want to fight the Spanish. The Spanish themselves have shown us that it is disastrous for an army to disagree internally, or we should never have cornered Silvestre on the Mountain

of the Baran. He was acting without orders, and he paid for it. We must take a lesson from him, and work in harmony. Otherwise we will have little chance."

"We will work together," said Bukkeish very seriously. "God willing, we shall drive them into the sea."

Bukkeish paused a moment to take a hot glass of tea from the hand of Ayad, and holding its rim and thick bottom between long thumb and bony knuckle, continued:

"Let us not quarrel about who will command. You will lead your men and I will lead mine. They will camp together sometimes, and sometimes apart, according to whatever is the best way to deal with the enemy. Before attacking we will speak together to decide how best to use our forces. After the war is over, when the fishes have glutted themselves on the last of them, then, God willing, you and I will stand aside and the councils of the tribes will decide what kind of government they will have to rule over them. It must be a single government, if we wish to keep our freedom. Is this agreed?"

"It is agreed," said the Schoolmaster, "but there is no use planning so far ahead in the future. There are immediate affairs which need attention. You have just said that we should march to the sea. Before us lie Tistutin, Arrui, and Selwan, all fortified places, and Nador, which is a large town, and Melilla itself, which will be the most difficult of all. We should lose no time capturing them before reinforcements arrive from Spain and from Tetwan."

"Something might be done toward Tetwan," said Bukkeish, "to keep them busy at home."

"Something has been done," replied the Schoolmaster.

"I have sent men there to arouse the Jebala, who are never hard to stir up. We must, however, take care of Raisuli, the great bloated bandit. He will turn to the Spaniards if we don't send him money, or if he thinks we will not win. We must do such a job here in the east that he will be afraid to go on the other side. Later we can send an army westward to attack Tetwan, and to get rid of Raisuli. We cannot trust him."

Thus did the Hajj Bukkeish and the Schoolmaster Abd el Krim converse together throughout the afternoon, until the light of the sun, dim in that room even at mid-day, had slunk out the door and had left the coals of the brazier to illumine alone the faces of the leaders of the conference.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HILL OF THE PORCUPINE

The winning streak of the Riffians continued, and their ardour increased apace with the dismay of the Spaniards. The day after the victories of Dar Driush and the Mountain of the Baran, which the Spaniards call Anual, the two armies which in a single night had become one army swept on to Tistutin and to Karameidhar on the River Kert. Five hundred died at Tistutin, and of the thirty garrisoned at Karameidhar, those who did not escape surrendered. The Riffians themselves were not without losses, but did not stop to count them.

Two days after the winning of Tistutin, the mujahidin surrounded the fort set on the low hill of Arrui, which in the Riffian language means Porcupine, and laid siege to it in proper fashion. The Spaniards from within returned fire with light field cannon, but the Riffians, who entrenched themselves quickly, suffered little harm from their shells. Soon the Spanish supply of shells ran out, and the artillery fire ceased altogether.

At Tistutin the Riffians had captured a number of field pieces, which they had turned over to the craftsmen of Taghzuth. It was the task of the latter to puzzle out the secret of their mechanism, and to see that no parts had been broken or removed. They had dragged the cannon to a point just out of range of rifle-fire from

the fort which was being besieged, so that the pieces could be put into action once they were ready.

Moh Umzien, Si Alush the schoolmaster, and the rest of the Ulad Abd el Mumen were entrenched on the far side of the fort, and behind them could see the Taghzuthis working.

"If your grandfather were only here," said Athemran the Fat to Moh Umzien, "he would be firing those things now, and we would have the fort knocked flat in half an hour."

The Hill of the Porcupine lay in sight of Kasba Selwan, and that strange cut-off pond of the sea, the Sebkha Bu Areg, which glistened before them in the noonday sun. A shimmering band of vapours rose from it and made the sand bar which delimited it difficult to see. Out in the Mediterranean Moh Umzien and his kinsmen could see ships riding by, a sight which was new to them. Far out near the horizon, naught but its two funnels showing clearly, marched a liner bound for Italy, while closer at hand steamed a freight boat with huge white letters reaching from deck to water line, bound for Melilla with a cargo of automobiles and flour, its crew apparently oblivious to the desperate crisis being enacted on the shore.

Several hours after the Ulad Abd el Mumen had taken their position in the ring of earthworks which surrounded the Hill of the Porcupine, Bukkeish crawled up to them from behind. He drew Moh Umzien and Si Alush the schoolmaster aside, and said, "You see that large building over there? It is full of airplanes. The Spaniards have all run out. Go guard it, and see that they don't take it back, when they have cooled off from

their fright. Abd el Krim is questioning all the deserters, to find if there are any who know how to fly."

The Ulad Abd el Mumen patrolled the ground outside the hangar for two days. Meanwhile some of the Riffians dug trenches around Selwan, and invested it also. After sunset on the second day a messenger came with a note from Bukkeish. Si Alush the schoolmaster crouched in front of a cooking fire and held the paper close so that he could read it.

"He says that we are to burn the planes," he said to Moh Umzien.

"Can't any of the deserters run them?"

"No."

"Then our chance is gone," said Moh Umzien thoughtfully. "If we could fly over Melilla, you and I, and drop bombs on them! We would cross the sea to Spain, and blow up Madrid, so that they would know what the women feel like in the markets, when the bombs come sizzling down. If we could slaughter the Christians with their own weapons, then we would have little trouble with them."

"It is a shame," replied Si Alush the schoolmaster, "but we must do what he orders. There is no chance to use them, and some day the Spaniards might take them back."

They emptied the tanks of the planes into cans, and soaked the wings. Then they rolled out drums of gasoline, and climbed on top of the hangar. Hauling drums after them, they soaked the roof and walls. Night had fallen when they stood back, half of the drums unused and well out of danger, and Moh Umzien rushed in with

a torch to light a powder train which reached about four fathoms from the wall.

With a thunder-like crackling, great flames leaped up like volatile mountain peaks, and the flat country between the Hill of the Porcupine and Selwan was lighted so clearly that every stone in it could be seen. It died down quickly after it had reached its peak, and soon all that remained was a tangled mass of girders glowing faintly.

Moh Umzien looked out to sea, and saw the riding-lights of a large ship.

"I wonder what those people out there think," he asked.

"On that ship," replied Si Alush the schoolmaster, "are other Christians. There are English, and perhaps Americans. They are travelling to distant countries, where they will see far greater things than this. There are probably men and women on that boat making love to each other. If they pause a moment to look at our flame, they will soon forget it. They have never heard of Bukkeish or of Abd el Krim, or even of the Rif."

"To think," said Moh Umzien sadly, "that people can be so ignorant. If only we could swim out to them and tell them."

For three days the mujahidin sat about the Hill of the Porcupine, while the Spaniards inside kept up a steady and unwavering fire. The faces which appeared over the parapets for a second at a time seemed gaunt and skeletal—they had not been too well fed before the siege had begun—and the Riffians could see that not only hunger and thirst but disease as well had smitten them.

On the third day the firing from within slackened

and in a few hours had ceased altogether. The Riffians had long since stopped wasting their ammunition, since they knew that something was destined to happen soon and they wanted their guns cool for the crisis.

The gates of the fort opened, and the men who had defended it limped out, crawling along like victims of a plague, their torn uniforms hanging loosely over their bones and shrivelled skin, their lips swollen and black with thirst. Fifteen hundred in all, they commenced running, at a slow, loose-jointed lope, toward the fort of Selwan, apparently caring not that it too was besieged.

The section of the Riffian line nearest the gate opened fire with deliberation and deadly accuracy. The Ulad Abd el Mumen, who were stationed out of range, looked upon this scene with amazement.

"They look as if they expected to be received in surrender," whispered Si Alush.

"There has been no word of it," replied Moh Umzien. "I was talking with Bukkeish this morning early, and he said nothing about a surrender."

Si Alush the schoolmaster sighted his rifle, and fired. The refugees had come into range.

"Some one has been making false promises," he said.

"If we find out who did it, we will kill him," replied Moh Umzien, as he drew back his bolt to reload.

The slaughter lasted less than an hour. Every Spaniard who had survived the siege died there on the gentle slope of the Porcupine. There was no joy of battle in this, no shouting and no surging visions of Paradise. It was a butcher's task, which had to be done, and was executed quickly. Except for the corps whose duty it

was to collect captured equipment and supplies, and there was nothing but guns to collect in Arrui, the mujahidin moved on to join their companions who were investing Selwan.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE WEDDING OF MOH UMZIEN

Even before the final destruction of the Hill of the Porcupine, the Galiya, who occupied the surrounding country and who had become friendly with the Spaniards through more than a decade of intimate contact, had fled to Melilla. The other Riffians considered the Galiya degenerate persons and traitors.

All the Spaniards had flocked into the city, climbing into the crumbling mediæval fortress through the hole in the parapet and up the winding passage to its top. Two fifths of the Galiya, the Mazuza and the Ait Shisher, had come after them, they too bringing their wives and children, and many of them had been admitted into the fort. But two other fifths, the Beni Sidel and Beni Bu Ifrur, coming later and more hurriedly, and leaving many of their women behind them, were forced to remain in the relatively defenceless modern town, built on the flat land below the citadel.

For this treachery on the part of the Galiya, Bukkeish and Abd el Krim had ordered their houses burnt and their livestock and grain confiscated. Moh Umzien, who had charge of a burning party, was running about in a village of the Beni Bu Ifrur, pounding in doors, driving out cattle, piling straw in houses, and setting them afire. Twenty or more houses he had thus destroyed when he came to one the main door of which was more

firmly fastened than those of the others. It was a large house with a loft, and well built.

Moh Umzien and his two companions burst in the door with the butts of their guns. Since it had been so firmly fastened, there might well be some one inside. It would have been difficult so to close and bar such a door from without. Posting a man at the door to make a noise and act as if he were about to enter, Moh Umzien and his companions ran quietly around to the back and looked through a small window which pierced the wall on that side. They could see no one in the room, but the light was so dim, compared to the glare outside, that they could not be sure. Furthermore there was a large pile of straw and blankets in the middle. Returning to the door, Moh Umzien bade the sentry he had left there go around to the rear window and sight his gun through it at the suspicious pile, and to be prepared to protect Moh Umzien and his follower if any one should attack them from in hiding.

Moh Umzien poked the pile hard with the muzzle of his gun. Feeling something soft, he poked it again, and harder. His second thrust was followed by a high-pitched scream.

"Another little Spaniard," he said. "Let's drag him out."

They pitched the straw to one side and lifted the blankets. Underneath they found three girls huddled together on the ground in terror and confusion. They were but partly dressed, and in order to cover themselves they snatched up the blankets and wrapped them about their bodies, holding them tightly over their shoulders.

In this scramble they could not prevent Moh Umzien

and his friends from observing them closely. The oldest, long faced and thin of nose, had reached twenty and was already growing angular. The youngest was still half grown. The third, however, was different. Moh Umzien looked, with a pounding of the arteries in his temples, at her firm-fleshed and smoothly rounded body. A mass of yellow hair hung loosely over her face, which, what little he saw of it, seemed soft and pleasing. After she had wrapped herself in her blanket, he noticed that her hands were undistorted by toil, and her fingernails oval and unbroken.

"If you would like to dress," said Moh Umzien with great embarrassment, realising that he should not have stared yet delighted that he had, "we will go outside to prevent others from breaking in."

With his companion he withdrew hastily and closed the door behind him. He ordered the man at the rear to climb down from the window.

When they had been outside the door scarcely a minute, a half-dozen Urriaghlis burst into view around the corner of a smouldering house. The leader of them, Moh Umzien noticed with surprise, was the same man whom he had seen in Taghzuth dictating a letter to Si Idris the schoolmaster in the market-place.

"What are you doing here?" cried Taher the Ferret, recognising immediately his traditional enemy.

"We are attending to our own affairs," replied Moh Umzien. "See that you do the same."

"You are standing about like women in front of a shop," said the Urriaghli. "Why don't you go in and burn that house? Must we come up and show you how to strike a match?"

Moh Umzien reddened and quivered with sudden anger. Jerking his rifle up to the familiar position between hip and shoulder, he shouted: "Who told you to give me orders? Move on! Get away from here! Go back to your Schoolmaster and recite your lessons to him."

"No shooting," cautioned the Urriaghli with a grin, which emphasised the wrinkles in his freckled and leathern cheeks. "You know it will be punished by death, as the two commanders have ordered. Get away from that door or we will push you away. You must be hiding women in there."

Moh Umzien, of a sudden flying into action, seized a stone, of which there were many at hand, and cast it with all his might at the Urriaghli. The latter, dodging quickly, caught it on the left wrist, which made him drop his rifle and shake his hand for a moment in pain.

From that second on there began a wild battle of grown men throwing stones at each other like children, with the added power and accuracy of men. They were sharp-cornered stones, which, when they hit, left bruises and wide cuts. For ten minutes this fight went on, the Urriaghlis advancing toward the door and then retreating, and the men under Moh Umzien's command defending it desperately. After this ten minutes of fighting, Moh Umzien rushed at Taher the Ferret and seized him by the collar, which he twisted with one hand, warding off Taher's clawing fingers with the other. His blond opponent's face, already flushed from the exercise and the excitement, turned the colour of a horseshoe heated over a charcoal fire, excepting over the bridge of the nose, where the skin stretched white over the sharp

bone, as if it would split. The deep-set piercing eyes of the man seemed to float forward and grow larger.

Not wishing to face a charge of murder, Moh Umzien loosened his hold a bit and said: "I will let you go now, if you and your men will leave us. Otherwise I will kill you. Will you go?"

A frantic nod, which shook drops of sweat into Moh Umzien's own face, was the answer, and in a short time the rival squadron was limping, panting, and swearing its way in another direction.

When they were well out of sight the door of the house opened and an old man with a curly white beard hobbled out, leaning on a cane. His blue eyes, hollow-set in a bony rim of brow-ridge and malar, gave evidence of suffering as well as of age.

"Where did you come from?" asked Moh Umzien.

"From the loft, where I had been hiding. Those are my daughters inside. May the blessing of God be upon you for saving them."

"This is the only house we have found occupied," said Moh Umzien. "Why did you stay here with your daughters?"

"My sons were killed fighting the Christians, all four of them," replied the old man. "My neighbours favoured the Spanish, but I wanted more sons to carry on my family and to fight. I married a young wife, who bore me only daughters.

"The rest of the people ran away to Melilla, but I stayed behind because I believe in your cause. However, when I saw the soldiers running about, wild-eyed, looting and burning, I didn't dare to face them. You have saved me, but I am old and weak, and no longer

count. You have also saved my daughters, and I will repay you. Go inside and choose the one you want, and you may have her without payment. Thus if I may have no sons, I will have worthy grandsons to carry on the war against the Christians."

"I know already," said Moh Umzien, with a tightening in his throat which made speech difficult, "which one I want. It is the middle one, neither the youngest nor the oldest."

Three nights later the wedding took place at the house of the bride. It was held on the third night, as is the custom among the bride's people, and in the bride's house, which was without precedent, but necessary because there was no other unburnt house in the whole village.

In the meanwhile the army had surrounded Melilla from the landward side, and had even broken into some of the outlying streets of the city. The Spanish women and children had taken to the sea in boats, and the men were prepared to follow them shortly. The Beni Bu Ifrur, who had fled to Melilla, had returned, and the moderators and sheikhs of their villages had slaughtered oxen before Bukkeish and Abd el Krim, imploring forgiveness and asking to be accepted as allies. The wealthiest man of the Beni Bu Ifrur, who was in jail at the citadel, had sent a message bidding the soldiers slaughter his five hundred head of cattle and feast on their meat. This, however, they had begun to do already. Since the army had been in the Galiya country the men had eaten little beside kebabs, or meat broiled on wire spits, and their enthusiasm at being so well fed and so near to complete victory had risen to incredible heights.

The sun had just set over the distant mountains of the Beni Tuzin, and the summer sky, splotched here and there with irregular clouds, shone resplendent with warm colour. The brown earth, rendered orange in the unearthly light of early evening, was covered with men, sitting, lying, jumping about, wrestling with each other, and firing at targets.

In the indefinite area demarcated on two sides by an angle of the house, an immense throng had gathered. Standing near a crackling, sputtering fire which gave up a thick column of aromatic smoke, a dozen girls were warming the heads of their tambourines to make them tighter and more resonant. Along the left wall sat the musicians, the cross-eyed flute-player from Beni Bu Nsar, and his companion the giant drummer, both of whom, having joined the army to share in its spoils, had heard of Moh Umzien's wedding and had come to it joyously, refusing to accept payment for their services, and telling every one who would listen that this was to make up for Moh Umzien's killing of Yahya the Left-handed on the mountain of Zarket. The flute-player soon began playing, and twisting his head up and down and from side to side in the circular motion of Jebally bards, commenced rendering his version of the new song which had sprung up over night, the exhilarating victory-gloating Laiya Labuya.

Next this pair squatted four pipers, tall dark-featured men from Temsaman, leaning their heads together in a conference as to how they should begin. On the opposite side sat a great number of the soldiery, and among them the young blood of the Beni Bu Ifrur, just re-

turned from Melilla, and now as enthusiastic as the others.

From this gathering arose shrieks and shouts of the most blood-curdling nature, and deafening bursts of hearty laughter. The spectators were already falling into the carnival spirit of the wedding.

One of the Temsaman pipers arose and shouted in a voice as loud as the braying of a bull, which hushed the others into comparative silence: "Oh, step up all ye wenches, and lay aside your modesty. Step up all ye wenches, and dance to the Laiya Labuya. Dance as ye have never danced before, so that the memory of this night will pass into the songs of bards and into story. And do not fail us, O ye young lads, tall reeds of the Rif, swifter than eagles, let us hear your shouting, and be not slow on the trigger."

As he finished this and sat down, a shout arose louder than any before; the pipers, all four of them, blew out their cheeks as if they would split, so that those sitting to the right of them could see the glow of the fire through them as through a sheep's bladder. The skirling and wavering which set in made the air vibrate with an even higher pitch of ecstasy.

The girls who had been tightening their tambourines ran to the sides and formed two parallel lines, and then began dancing, each with one hand upon the shoulder of the girl immediately in front; weaving back and forth, skirts fluttering and braids bobbing with the motion. Back and forth they danced and in and out, moving slowly as a group, while each dancer rotated hips and belly in a quick, erotic motion. Lifting their bare brown

feet in unison, and setting them down in a united thud, their flushed cheeks trembling and bright lips moving to the song, they became more and more intoxicated with the rhythm and with the heat of their own exertion.

The young men began firing in the air, resting the butts of their guns on the ground, so that the burnt powder, belched from the muzzles, blackened the celebrants' ears and rendered them temporarily deaf. Over in the corner next the fire huddled a group of old women, rendering the falsetto trill of the zigharit.

Through all this bedlam rang the clear song of the dancers, steady and monotonous, the same and yet not the same, with one chorus and many verses. One line, led by the foremost girl in it, would sing a verse, then all would sing the chorus; then the other line would sing the next verse, and then would come the chorus. In this way they dramatised a conversation between Spaniards and Riffians.

ALL: Oh, the Father of Bullfrogs,* he eats his religion,
His soldiers are puny and huddled together;
As the hawk from the mountain swoops down on the pigeon,
So the Riffi descends on his foe in the heather.
Ayara liara liarala ya buya.

* The Riffians commonly called the Spaniards by the name Bu Zharwan, which means "the father of bullfrogs," on account of their habit of eating frogs. Since the war both this title and the song in which it appears have been prohibited.

FIRST: O airplane, O airplane, why did you buzz so loud?
The soldiers have heard you and winged you unheeding;
From over the mountain and under the cloud,
Your lieutenant is dead and your sergeant is bleeding.

ALL: Ayara liara liarala ya buya.

FIRST: On the mountain of cedar, the Baran's high crest,
You pitched your white tents in the lap of the sky—
Oh, why did you climb to the thunderbirds' nest?
Speak to us, bones, Oh, speak to us, why?

ALL: Ayara liara liarala ya buya.

SECOND: The girls of Temsaman, so stately and tall,
In many-hued waistbands and kerchiefs of red,
The sway of their nipples, their skirts rise and fall,
We came here to see them, and now we are dead.

ALL: Ayara liara liarala ya buya.

ALL: Oh, the Father of Bullfrogs, he eats his religion,
His soldiers are puny and huddled together;
As the hawk from the mountain swoops down on the pigeon,
So the Riffi descends on his foe in the heather.
Ayara liara liarala ya buya.

On and on went the stanzas, telling of the battles waged from el Azib of Meidhar over to Selwan, new verses being extemporised then and there to celebrate the plight of Melilla, and the joy of Our Master Mohammed to see his Faith exalted. Now and then, while the dancers were whispering together deciding what they should sing next, the lascivious warbling of the flute, rich in overtones, would make itself heard, pitched higher than the drone of the Temsaman pipes.

The dreamlike, wavering dance, the gloating song sung to the same music over and over, the zigharit of the old women, the hollow pounding of drums and of tambourines, and the combined music of flute and of pipes, which ate into the brain and infected one with pagan ecstasy, and over all the screeching, shouting, and gunplay of the men, lasted without abatement until about ten o'clock, when the father of the bride, arrayed in a new and spotlessly white jellaba, came out from the same door whence he had issued three days previously, and motioned the men-folk in to eat.

They flocked into the low-ceiled room, in the centre of which stood a huge wooden tub six feet in diameter, heaped high with at least two hundredweight of kuskus, the coarse white nodules of barley surmounted by a cauldron load of lamb stew and turnips, and an abundance of raisins.

The steam from this dish, if dish it can be called, filled the room. Fifteen or more guests could surround the tub at one time, and as soon as one man felt that he could hold no more, he would waddle out backwards and let another take his place. When the level of the kuskus had sunk to less than half its original height, all the men

crowded into the room again, this time standing up, and commenced throwing silver coins into the barley.

Heavy Spanish dollars were the most frequent; with their weight, when they struck edgewise, they burrowed far into the food. This money was intended as a present to the groom, to help defray the expense of the feast and to help establish him in his home.

When the casting of silver was nearly over there entered two young men at the same time, who were obviously ill-pleased both with the wedding and with each other. One of them, tall, long-nosed and beardless, a native of the Beni Bu Ifrur, threw a handful of coins, amounting to five dollars, into the tub at once.

The other, a stocky fellow with a red moustache, and thick eyebrows which met over the bridge of his nose, very ostentatiously counted out ten dollars and threw these in. The tall one reached into his scrip and drew out a great handful of money, from which he counted out fifteen pieces and cast them in with a disdainful flip of his thin, bony hand. Fifteen silver dollars, however, require much space, and the nonchalance with which he threw them caused him to spill three of the coins off the side of his narrow hand to the floor. These he reached down to pick up with great mortification.

The red-moustached youth could muster but three more dollars, along with three pesetas and one two-peseta piece, and a tiny Hassani girsh. He threw these in rapidly, and when his rival had commenced laughing, squirmed out of his richly embroidered jellaba and threw that in the kuskus also. Not content with this, he unslung his empty scrip and took up his leathern slippers from where he had left them by the door, and throwing

these things on top of the jellaba, started to walk out, barefooted and in his shirt, with a poor semblance of dignity.

His lanky rival, who burst out laughing and called after him, ran out into the area of the dancing to cry out derision, at which the red-moustached one seized his rifle from where it was leaning against the wall, and fired. The shot, too hastily released, sped between the target's bony legs and buried itself, with a puff of dust, in the wall. It was only by the greatest of luck that one or more wedding guests had not been killed.

At this the giant drummer of Beni Bu Nsar was afoot and in a second he had clasped the angry fellow about the chest, pinning his arms to his side; while the old man, the father of the bride, took his rifle away from him.

"Get out, both of you," said the host, "since you cannot behave yourselves. If you want to kill each other, do it in some one else's courtyard."

Not long after this episode it was midnight. All the clouds which had hung over the west to heighten the sunset had departed. It was on a night such as this, said the old men, that the gates of Heaven would open and the watchful would be able to look straight through them to the face of God.

From a distance came a tumult of shouting and the firing of guns, drawing nearer and nearer, until a procession appeared. The nucleus of it consisted of a mule on which the bride was mounted, her soft long hair flowing over her shoulders and her face covered by a haik. Her hands were stained solidly with henna and her eyelids, since all of her face that one could see was her grey eyes, blackened with kohl. About her marched

all of her male cousins and uncles, since she had no brothers. The leader of the squadron, he who held the bridle of her mule, helped her down when the company halted.

At this point Moh Umzien appeared from the doorway to the left between the musicians. He presented a very strange appearance, with the hood of his jellaba raised and the heels of his slippers turned up to the ankles. In his hand he bore a stick about six feet long, and soon it was evident that the leader of the bride's party bore one too, for straightway the two engaged in a mock battle, Moh Umzien making believe take his bride by force, and the cousin making believe defend her. The two sticks clashed against each other with resounding whacks, again and again, until it began to look as if they were waging a real fight. Finally, however, the cousin relaxed his efforts, and making believe that Moh Umzien had beaten him badly, withdrew to the wall and sat down.

Another of the escorts handed the bride a grass tray full of grains of barley, raisins, and almonds. She gathered these up in her hennaed hands, and cast them about among the crowd as if sowing them, letting the seed slip between her slender fingers. The men scrambled about on the ground picking them up, for the barley seeds were filled with the magical fertility of the new bride and, when mixed with the seed grain at the next planting, would cause the crops to flourish mightily. The raisins and almonds were eaten with great despatch, since they too were filled with strength, and the almonds especially made one powerful at begetting.

When the tray had been emptied, Moh Umzien

walked up to his bride. He took her hand in his, and led her into the room from which he had come, helping her in ahead of him, and closing the door after. One of his comrades, Athemran the Fat, sat down with his back against the door, acting as sentry, and holding a rifle in his hand, ready to fire.

The crowd waited in silence for a few minutes, and the face of the bride's father was tense with excitement. After a short time the door opened slightly, and Moh Umzien's hand appeared, holding the crumpled wedding cloth. Athemran the Fat seized this, and the door closed. Athemran the Fat examined it quickly, and fired his gun. The expression on the face of the bride's father changed to one of joy, and tears appeared in the corners of his eyes. The proof of virginity was passed from hand to hand among the men and then among the old women, whereupon the zigharit, the dancing and the song, the shouts and shrieks and rifle fire and drumming and skirling commenced again and continued without abatement until dawn.

CHAPTER XXXII

DISINTEGRATION

The Riffian army under its joint command, while it had shown itself irresistible in its march on Melilla, could not, without better equipment and organisation, hope to capture the citadel. Crowded in their tall fortress on the rock overlooking the harbour, the Spaniards were in little danger of being dislodged. Most of the lower city had, however, been abandoned, and many of its civil inhabitants had fled in boats.

An army such as was at that time gathered about Melilla could not survive prolonged idleness. The downward sweep to the sea, the exhilarating succession of victories, had held the mass of warriors of different tribes and of different loyalties together, as long as the march and victories continued. Once camped on the rocky hills and sand which encircled Melilla, the quiet and inaction failed further to support the mental elation of the men, and they once more turned their thoughts to personal and immediate things.

Petty quarrels broke out between tribal contingents and even between families within tribes. The relationship between Bukkeish and Abd el Krim, never cordial, became one of strained tolerance.

The strain of the last few weeks left its mark upon Bukkeish more than upon his rival, for the former was the older man by twenty years, and spared himself little,

and was more accustomed to bluff assertions of authority than to subtlety. The mental agility necessary to cope with Abd el Krim was not his by nature. As a result of these things Bukkeish's temper, never good, grew shorter and he often spoke harshly to his men. Agents from the other camp were constantly among them, and many promises of new loyalties were secretly made.

Moh Umzien was too intelligent a young man to permit the pleasures of a new marriage to absorb all his attention, or to prevent him from keeping well in touch with the course of events. He saw clearly the dissatisfaction and unrest which pervaded the idle camp, and felt that the tide was irrevocably turning against Bukkeish. He spoke little about these things, having as his only confidant Si Alush the schoolmaster of the Ulad Abd el Mumen.

Several weeks passed, and it was harvest time in the Rif. The men could not afford to waste a crop, risking starvation in the winter, for the sake of bottling up a few thousand Spaniards indefinitely in a stone tower. The Spaniards would suffer little by remaining there, compared to the loss of the besiegers. For this reason the numbers of those who sat on the rocks about Melilla grew steadily smaller, and it at length appeared that the armies would disband altogether.

Moh Umzien decided to wait no longer, but to go home with his bride and do his harvesting. One morning the two of them were busy in his father-in-law's house getting together what clothing they would take with them. This was a simple task for Moh Umzien, for except for a spare shirt he owned no garments other than those in which he stood; in addition to the jellaba,

scrip, and slippers which the red-moustached youth had thrown in the kuskus tub on the night of the wedding. His wife, however, having lived in the house all of her life, had many garments, with most of which she was loath to part. Only a small bundle could be carried, and for a girl who had never before left home, decision was difficult.

Footsteps approached the house, irregular, shuffling footsteps, and Moh Umzien, opening the door, was not surprised to find the Captain Ayad, the leader of the Beni Amart, standing outside. It was he who had held counsel with Bukkeish before sending the Beni Amart men to fight for Abd el Krim at the Mountain of the Baran.

"Come in and sit down with us," said Moh Umzien. "We are making ready to leave for home. How soon are you going?"

"I am going as soon as I have spoken with you," replied the Amarti, lowering himself into squatting posture on his sound leg, and resting the butt of his rifle on the ground, holding the weapon in his right hand by the trigger-guard.

"Hadisha," said Moh Umzien to his wife, "light a fire and make some tea."

The Captain Ayad could see that tea making would involve unpacking and would take time.

"Do not bother," he said.

"It will be little trouble," replied Moh Umzien; "please drink with me."

"You would rather be on your way, and I on mine. Let us talk." As he pronounced the last sentence, Ayad glanced slightly in the direction of Hadisha.

Moh Umzien, seeing this, looked up at his wife, twisting the corner of his mouth in a peculiar manner. Hadisha gathered up all of her clothing into her arms, and carried it outside, shutting the door behind her.

"I have been talking with Abd el Krim," commenced Ayad in a low tone.

"What did he say to you that would concern me?" inquired Moh Umzien in a detached manner.

"He said one thing. Bukkeish is weakening; he is growing old. He no longer has the hold over his men which he had in the beginning, up at el Azib of Meidhar. There will be commissions for both of us at Ajdir. Abd el Krim knows all about your family and its troubles, and he knows what Bukkeish has had to do with them. He also knows that I and my people were not too fond of Bukkeish in earlier times. Like you, we joined him because we believed the Riffians needed a leader against the Spaniards. So we did, and still do, more than ever, and the leader who has shown himself to be strongest is Abd el Krim."

"Who else has turned?" asked Moh Umzien. Ayad could read nothing in the young man's expression.

"I don't know whether to tell you any more or not. You may go running back to Bukkeish," said he.

"To tell the truth," declared Moh Umzien, "I am listening with an open mind. There is no reason why I should stand by Bukkeish after all he has done to my father and to me, yet Abd el Krim has never done anything for me either. What I want just now is to go home and take in the harvest."

"What about the war?" asked the Captain Ayad.

"That will start up again next spring, when the rains

have quit and the snow is gone. You know that as well as I do."

"Yes, I know that, but which side will you be on?"

"There is much time left before next spring," answered Moh Umzien. "There are brown leaves to fall and green ones to stretch themselves into the air. If Bukkeish weakens as much as you say he will, you may see me on your side."

"I will shoot you if you tell about this," said Ayad decisively.

"I know how to shoot too," replied Moh Umzien.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DEATH IN HIBAR

About eight months later, when the last snow had crawled to the top of the Jebel Hammam and vanished, at the season when the mountain people were beginning to eat their early crop of peas, a company of twenty-five men paused on the crest of a hill overlooking the valley of the Ulad Alu ben Aissa, a region of the Gzennaya directly to the east of Tiddest, on the other side of the Rock of the Ogress. The sun had just set to the right of the men and the grey-brown houses beneath them were barely visible. Squat, coarse-looking men were they, clad in short jellabas in the thick meshes of which were entwined scraps of thistle, caught earlier in the wool of mountain sheep. The men paused to look about them, uncertain of their road.

"There is a village of the Ulad Alu ben Aissa," said one, intoning in the thick speech of the upland Urriaghlis. "They are in alliance with us and against Bukkeish. Let's climb down and ask them the way before we get lost in the night."

The men descended, climbing nimbly over the rough ground until they came to the bottom of the valley, and saw before them a group of about fifty men reposing beneath the olive trees, some quiet, others joking, and the older ones engrossed in the duties of evening prayer. Although the Urriaghlis did not know this, some of the

men were from Tiddest, and the others natives of Hibar, the village in question. They were the only ones of the Ulad Alu ben Aissa who were still loyal to Bukkeish.

"Peace be upon you," said the newcomers.

"And upon you the peace," replied those under the trees. "Who are you and whence do you come?"

"We come from the mountains," said they, "from Ikhaninshen, from beyond Taurirt, from the Aith Aros and from Iketchumen. We have heard that the Hajj Bukkeish has hid himself in his house at Afussa, and wish to learn the way. You are our allies. You had better tell us."

"Sit down and rest a while," said one of the men, whose scalp was hairless and scarred from favus and whose short upper lip displayed a glistening array of teeth. "In the morning we are going across the mountain to smoke him out with powder, and you can come along with us. There will be plenty of time and enough booty for us all."

"You are right, Scabhead," assented one of the others. "Why should we let them go on first and collect all the spoils?"

"Sit down, you hill-boars," commanded the Scabhead. "Later you may eat with us and sleep in my house."

The Urriaghlis were not at all displeased, for they realised that it would be better to have allies in trapping so sharp-fanged a jackal as Bukkeish.

"Did Abd el Krim send you?" asked the Scabhead.

At this the Urriaghlis looked uncertain for a moment, and then one of them admitted, "No, we did not have time to wait for orders. We know enough to act ourselves when the time is ripe."

At this the Scabhead recommenced his joking with his companions, who continually taunted him on his deformity, until the warden of the mosque, a stocky man with a broad beard, summoned the company inside for supper.

Over the repast, which consisted of new peas heated in butter, the Urriaghlis expanded on the excellence of their tribe. Thick of hands and of head, there was no humour in them.

"It is useless," said one of them, "for others to go against our Schoolmaster, for we of Beni Urriaghel hold the upper hand. We have the most men and the most arms, and the others must let us take charge."

"True enough," lamented the Scabhead with a mock sigh, while his companions looked at the Urriaghlis intently, "times have changed. The boars of Jebel Hammam wear trousers now, and their sows slippers. The lions of Kuin Mountain are old, their teeth have dropped out and their tongues hang from their mouths, while they scamper about after the boars, eating their leavings."

After the meal was over the Urriaghlis, tired from a day of climbing, felt sleep creeping over them. The Scabhead, seeing this, led them to a house and gave them mats and blankets for the night. The room was a large one and low roofed. In it had been piled a great quantity of dry pine branches and juniper brush.

"If you find it cold here," said their host, "you may build a fire."

"No," replied the guests, "we find it warm enough. Wake us before dawn and we will get an early start."

"We will be waiting for you," replied the Scabhead. "Good night, and may you have much rest."

He returned to the mosque where the men sat until midnight, jesting, wrestling, and playing at checkers.

"What fools they are," said the warden of the mosque. "If the men of Ajdir were as simple as they, we should have little trouble with them."

"It is not the men of Ajdir about whom we should worry," said another, "but the Ulad Abd el Mumen up in the Vale of Iherrushen. If they had stood up for our leader, it would have been the Schoolmaster who is in hiding now, and not Bukkeish. Had Bukkeish not upheld the killing of the Malim Hamidu and of Amar the Scabhead by the Beni Tadmut, and if he had not afterwards sent the Ulad Abd el Mumen to Fez, he would have been spared much trouble in the past, and would now be out of this trap. No one knows now which way Moh Umzien and Si Alush will turn. At any rate I am glad that Amar the Scabhead is dead, and not fighting against us."

"Like all of our kind," said the present Scabhead with a great show of dignity, "Amar was a man of great courage and intelligence. All of us scabheads are the same."

"Very well," said the warden of the mosque. "If you are so capable, go take a peek at your guests, and see if they are asleep. You have told them that the house belongs to you, so you will have to do the rest of it."

As the Scabhead was rising to leave, a plaintive wail came from the real owner of the house, a small emaciated man sitting in a corner: "Since you have said it is yours, Scabhead, you can pay for it when it is gone."

"Be quiet," replied Scabhead over his shoulder. "Bukkeish will give you a better one after he has won. It is bad enough to have all the rest of the Ulad Alu ben Aissa in league with the enemy without one man of Hibar, however small, joining them too."

Scabhead soon reappeared in the doorway of the mosque, whispering: "Come out, all of you; they are asleep."

The men of Tiddest and of Hibar emerged into the damp night air, clutching their rifles, and crept toward the house wherein slept the Urriaghlis. This they surrounded, taking up positions convenient for sighting, and training the guns on the door and rear windows. Scabhead and two others furtively opened the door wide enough to crawl through sidewise, entered, strewed the dry brush and boughs about the floor, piling it highest near the door, and then handed out the rifles of the sleeping men. The warden of the mosque counted the weapons. When he had received the twenty-fifth, Scabhead and his companions emerged. The leader, lighting a match and igniting the brush within reach, shut the door tightly and braced it with a pole.

"Why didn't you get the cartridges too?" cried the owner of the house.

"They went to sleep with their scrips and belts on," was the reply.

Soon cries arose from within, and high flames leaped through the thatch of the roof. One man, terror stricken, forced the door and ran out, his beard singed from his face and his clothing smouldering. A dozen bullets pierced him. He leaped over the low cliff which borders the stream and landed on the wet pebbles below.

The men of Tiddest and those of Hibar returned to the mosque to divide the guns, and straightway after set out for Afussa, to join Bukkeish before dawn in his house across the mountains.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BUKKEISH PAYS

The house at Afussa was a large one. It had been built by Moh the father of the Malim Hamidu of the Ulad Abd el Mumen, and had, a generation earlier, passed into the hands of Bukkeish's family. Possessing many rooms, it sprawled from the loins of the mountain across a flat place to the edge of a steep ridge, below which lay the path to Tiddest. The sun, already high, glistened on the rifles of men hidden in the bushes above and to the west of the house. Most of the Iherrushen men were there, from Telmest, Tarosht, and Teliwin, and there was also a contingent of the Beni Amart commanded by Bukkeish's former ally, the Captain Ayad.

Under the lee of the ridge sat the Ulad Abd el Mumen, hidden from sight, until Si Alush and Moh Umzien emerged and climbed the ridge. The men hidden above the house did not fire on them and the two gave no indication of their knowledge that the ambushers were there. Entering the house they passed directly to the large room behind the courtyard where Bukkeish sat on a mat, his men around him, and among them a scabhead with a grinning face.

Bukkeish's reception, while not warm, was nevertheless within the dictates of courtesy. When the necessary salutations were over, he said to Si Alush: "Why have you come here?"

Si Alush pulled his thin beard with a wan hand, and wrinkling his high forehead into a field of furrows, said: "You know as well as I do that times are turning against us, and we are hard pressed."

"All the rest of the Iherrushen have turned against me, except the Beni Tadmut. I am not sure about you. When will you turn?"

"We have been strongly urged," answered Si Alush, lifting his head suddenly and looking the leader straight in the eyes. "We have tradition to support our turning, but there is no need of it. Don't forget that you had us exiled. If you had not led our enemies, we would have defeated them. We have not forgotten it, but we can let it pass. As you yourself said last year, 'It is time to forget our small differences.' The Ulad Abd el Mumen seem to be the only ones who have so far succeeded. You and Abd el Krim have not. Who is fighting the Christians? While lions quarrel over the corpse of a goat the jackals tear the flesh and strip the bones. However, we will defend you still, but must have more ammunition. You cannot expect men to fight for you when they have no cartridges. We would be foolish to remain on your side if it meant being slaughtered in haste, like sheep who are half frozen."

Bukkeish thought a moment. The skin of his cheeks, etched with small red veins, sagged loosely between cheek-bone and jaw, where formerly it had swelled in a well-fed curve.

"You are right," he replied. "We must all have bullets if we would live. How many do you want?"

"Five hundred rounds."

"You may have three hundred. Take them and go."

Five minutes later the two envoys walked down the sharp back of the ridge, Moh Umzien stooping over under the weight of a heavy sack. When they had passed out of sight of the house they climbed down the side and made their way back, keeping carefully out of view, to where the others of their family were hidden. Here they distributed the cartridges and took up carefully concealed positions which would enable them to drive back any reinforcements which might come from Tiddest to help the Hajj Bukkeish.

Soon the crackling of rifle fire echoed through the gorges on either side of the ridge, until it was impossible to distinguish single shots in the general roar. The Ulad Abd el Mumen held their fire, letting the others attack Afussa. Their task lay toward Tiddest, and when a few hours later they spied the brown-clad forms of men slinking up on the other side of the ridge, they opened fire so effectively that the reinforcements were obliged to crawl back to the forking of the ravine from the Bayu, and to stay there. They did not know who had fired on them from the other side of the chasm, so well hidden had their assailants been. The Ulad Abd el Mumen, who had previously scorned such diplomacy, did not intend to reveal their affiliation until they might be forced to.

Bukkeish could do without rescuing. No one knew the rocks and gravel slopes back of the Bayu better than did he, and when the besiegers, heartened by the cessation of firing from within, late in the night, cautiously approached and entered, they found four corpses propped up against the walls, one of them a scabhead. Bukkeish was at that time sitting in his mosque at Tiddest.

Twenty days passed. Bukkeish continued to sit in his mosque, while all the Ikhuanen kept sentry duty up the Vale of Tighza. There were no concentrated attacks made during this period since the Iherrushen men were busy threshing their pulse and sowing the late crop of barley. The Ikhuanen sent their women out to attend to these matters, but many terraces remained untouched and yielded no crop that season.

On the night of the twentieth day, when the Iherrushen men had finished the heavier duties of farming and had assembled with the rest of the Gzennaya at the Thursday market of Ikaroen, Bukkeish felt obliged to act or else face destruction. Not only had Abd el Krim won the other tribes away from him with his superior force of will and knowledge learned from the Christians, but the Gzennaya themselves, all but Bukkeish's own men, had turned against him.

Bukkeish climbed the dangerous trail up the gorge of Tighza, over the Noisy Mountain, and the spring near its crest gurgled unseen as he passed in the night. Down the other side he scrambled, his men after him, guiding and hauling, sometimes even carrying, a short-horned bull across the treacherous gaps in the path. Two other men led a mule saddled with paniers, in either basket of which a heavy box thrust its sharp corners dangerously into the braided halfa.

When they had descended into the valley of Ikaroen Bukkeish took the bull's rope and led the beast himself, heading the procession of his followers. Haggard he looked, and nerve worn, as he entered the market. The assembled soldiery forebore shooting him at sight of the

bull and the mule, realising that it would be more profitable to let him live.

Looking straight ahead and speaking to no one, he led the bull directly to the whitewashed mosque beneath the olive trees at the foot of the slope, and halted the animal at the door. Drawing a curved knife from inside his jellaba he seized the bull's head and, twisting it around with one arm and the weight of his chest, commenced sawing at its throat while several of his men held its legs and tail. While so doing he mumbled the formula of sacrifice.

Two men of Ikhuanen lowered the panier from the mule's back to the ground, letting it fall the last part of the distance with a crash. The moderators of all the Gzennaya surrounded it, opening the boxes with eager hands, while deputies thrust back the crowd with knives and bayonets. They dumped the silver on a halfa mat.

It took them some time to count it, arranging it in piles of hundreds. When finally the moderators agreed that the sum amounted to thirty-five hundred dollars Hassani, the amount which Bukkeish had been told to bring, they commenced distributing it to their men. Each man approached his own moderator and was given a sum which that official considered commensurate with the man's bravery and accomplishments in war. In twenty minutes the pile had vanished. Si Alush, acting as moderator of the Iherrushen, handed it out in fistfuls without stopping to count. Moh Umzien, pausing under an olive tree to count his portion, found it to contain seven dollars and a half. Fifteen men who had received nothing were kneeling in a group in the mosque giving vent to angry ejaculations and taking counsel to-

gether as to what they should do, but when the moderators entered they arose and dispersed, giving dramatic evidence of the reason for their failure.

After all present had counted the money and disposed of it about their persons, they flocked about the mosque door, anxious to cook and eat the meat of the sacrificial bull. Each moderator was handed a portion the size of which was supposedly governed by the number of his men. He took this to a place under the trees where some of his followers had kindled a fire and there converted the sacrifice into kebabs, which the soldiers ate eagerly as soon as they were ready.

CHAPTER XXXV

ARE THERE JACKALS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Moh Umzien received a message from Abd el Krim bidding him present himself at Ajdir. He left the same day, not without a certain feeling of fear, but nevertheless realising that it would not be safe to defy him. After he had sat down in front of the gate of the headquarters at Ajdir, in a line of several dozen men all of whom had some business with the leader, he was not permitted to wait long enough completely to recover his breath.

A guard emerged through a gap in the gate and peered around at the line. Spying Moh Umzien, he said, "Are you from the Iherrushen?"

"I am," replied Moh Umzien. "I received a letter from Abd el Krim asking me to come here."

"Then enter at once, he is waiting for you."

Moh Umzien stood up and straightened his jellaba. He reached behind his head to tuck in the end of his turban, as the guard led him across a courtyard wherein squatted fifty or more Urriaghlis clad in silk-embroidered jellabas. On the other side was a verandah and behind it two rooms. Moh Umzien was led into the one on the left. Inside it was quite dark, and it took Moh Umzien some time to make out the contents of the chamber.

"Are you the grandson of the Malim Hamidu?" The

question came from a grey lump in the corner. Moh Umzien looked intently until the form of Abd el Krim, clothed in a plain grey jellaba, was visible to him.

"I am," he replied.

"You have been serving under Bukkeish, haven't you?"

"I did at first."

"Why did you do that, instead of coming to me?"

"Because he said he would unite all the tribes and I thought he was able to do it."

"You know now who is strongest, don't you?"

"Yes, I know that you are."

"Why did you tell all those lies about me up at Taghzuth? Why did you say that I was a pimp?"

"I was working for Bukkeish. Did you call me here to ask me these questions?"

"You are lucky I didn't call you here to throw you in jail," replied Abd el Krim. "I have heard what you did at Afussa," he added.

"Well?"

"Are you willing to go in on my side?"

"There is nothing else to do," replied Moh Umzien. "You have shown yourself to be the most capable leader, the cleverest and most powerful man in the Rif. Every one should obey you."

"I have spent a lot of time talking to you," said the leader, "but I am satisfied. There are forty men from Iherrushen, mostly from the Fez colony, in Algeria threshing wheat on a French farm. They are all in the same place. Do you know where they are?"

"Yes. I went there one year with my father."

"Go get them and bring them here. If you get

through I will make you a Captain of One Hundred."

"I will have them here in fifteen days," said Moh Umzien.

"Then get out. I am busy."

"In just a moment," said Moh Umzien. "If I do as you say, will you let all the Ulad Abd el Mumen who are still there come back from Fez, to settle in the Vale of Iherrushen?"

"They may all come back," answered Abd el Krim. "You needn't worry about Bukkeish any longer, or the council either. Now go."

Several days later Moh Umzien was walking along a wooded ridge, just under the edge of it. Below him lay a flat plain covered with the stubble of a fresh harvest. Here and there on little hillocks stood French farmhouses, surrounded by groups of trees and by shrubbery.

On the far side of the plain a train moved rapidly eastward. From the engine emerged a small puff of steam which spurted above the flat-lying column of smoke, and was followed after a few seconds by the faint sound of a shrill whistle.

Directly beneath the ridge Moh Umzien could see the roof of the nearest farmhouse. Some distance from it stood a flat-roofed house and a half dozen beehive-shaped straw huts, the quarters of the hired help. Moh Umzien sat down and made himself comfortable, with his back against a cork-tree. He remembered the place clearly, and there would be no use approaching it closely until night. At length he spied a crevice between two stones, filled with brown leaves. He crawled into this, drew armfuls of the leaves over him, and slept.

When he awoke the moon was high, and the noise of drumming smote his ears. Climbing down the hillside he approached the noise. At length he emerged from the trees and stood on flat ground. Dropping to his stomach, he crawled to the back of the house. Here he stood up again and looked cautiously through the window.

The room was lighted by an oil lamp, and a fire glowed in a brazier. Men sat around all the walls and over most of the floor. One was beating a narrow-waisted clay drum which he held between his left ear and shoulder, with his head cocked on one side. Many of them were singing, in Arabic:

"If you wish to have a girl,
Five cents is plenty.
If you wish a musical girl,
Ten cents is plenty.
Avadunni, Avadunni."

Directly opposite the window sat Amar the Younger, the son of Moh Umzien's uncle Amar the Scabhead. Moh Umzien stared at him intently until at last he looked up, and after a while saw his cousin's face at the window. Amar the Younger did not betray his discovery to the others, but winked at Moh Umzien. The latter beckoned with his head and withdrew from the window. Amar arose and started toward the door.

"Where are you going?" asked one of the Arabs.

"Where do you think I am going?" asked Amar in turn, whereupon all of the Riffians laughed.

Amar joined Moh Umzien outside, and the two climbed a short distance up the hill to talk.

"What brings you here?" asked Amar the Younger.

"Abd el Krim sent me," replied Moh Umzien. "I am to bring all the Riffians here back to Ajdir, and we will have our own company."

"Why should we do that?" asked Amar.

"Wouldn't you like to go back to the Rif and live, after we have won the war?"

"Yes, but how about Bukkeish and the council?"

"Bukkeish is finished, and there will be no more council. Abd el Krim has promised to let us all back."

"Do you believe him?" asked Amar.

"Of course I do. If we are on his side, why shouldn't he want us back?"

"How do you plan to get to Ajdir with forty men? The French won't let us through."

"You have passports to go back to Fez, haven't you?"

"Yes, but you have none. And they would catch us going north."

"We will see to that," said Moh Umzien. "We can travel at night and hide by day. The French aren't fighting us. They are selling us guns to fight the Spaniards with."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Fairly," answered Moh Umzien. "Get the men up here on the ridge and we will start to-night."

"It will be late," replied Amar. "We will have to wait until the Arabs are asleep so that no one will find out until morning."

Amar returned to the house, and Moh Umzien waited patiently until midnight. At length he saw a file of men emerge from the house and walk carefully toward him. The moon was low now, and when it had disappeared the company started across the plain, hoping to cross the

railroad tracks and reach the ridge on the other side before daybreak. They travelled rapidly, sometimes walking and sometimes running.

When they came to the tracks they dropped to their hands and knees to crawl over it, with Moh Umzien in the lead. As he was standing up on the other side, a soldier stepped around a bush and thrust the end of a rifle into Moh Umzien's belly. Moh Umzien was the only Riffian who was armed. He had a pistol in his scrip, but it was no use to him now. The soldier blew his whistle. Other soldiers came running down the tracks in both directions.

"Where is your passport?" asked the first soldier.

"I will get it," said Moh Umzien, reaching toward his scrip.

"No, you won't," said the soldier. "Put your hands over your head. I will get it myself."

While a second soldier covered Moh Umzien, the first reached in the scrip hanging at Moh Umzien's side and drew out a revolver. "Aha," he said knowingly, "so this is your passport. Come along with me to the post."

The other Riffians had meanwhile shown their papers, which were in order. They stood together discussing what they should do next. Many were in favour of returning to the farm.

"Go beyond the post," said Moh Umzien in Shillhah, "and wait under the first walnut tree. If I can get out I will join you. If I am not there before morning, go back to the Rif by yourselves. Scatter."

The soldiers led Moh Umzien ahead to a long one-storied building and thrust him into a cell which opened on the front, locking the door behind him. After a few

moments, when the soldiers had gone, Moh Umzien tried the door and the shutter at the back. Neither could be moved, as he had expected. Then he felt of the floor. It was cement. He began picking the plaster from the rear wall with his fingernails to see with what sort of masonry the wall had been built.

As he was doing this he heard some one approach, and then desisted. The door opened, and a French officer with his trousers hastily drawn over a nightshirt entered. He held a lamp in one hand and Moh Umzien's revolver in the other.

"You are taking these men to Abd el Krim, aren't you?" asked the officer in Arabic.

"I am not taking them anywhere, by the looks of things," answered Moh Umzien. "This is a tight cell you have put me in."

"There are others tighter," replied the officer with a smile. Staring at Moh Umzien intently, he asked: "Are there jackals in your country?"

"Many indeed," replied Moh Umzien, "and they are very wily."

"Then be like a jackal," replied the officer.

Without further speech the latter went out. The key turned twice in the lock behind him. Moh Umzien waited until the footsteps had ceased, and then pulled the door open. His revolver was lying on the ground in front of the threshold. He picked it up and kept it in his hand as he crawled out of range of the buildings.

The men travelled as they had intended and without further mishap, over the border into Morocco, and across the Muluya, which last had been difficult because the regular fords were guarded and none of them could

swim. Luckily the river was low, otherwise they would not have been able to cross it.

They went through the country of the Ulad Stut, nomadic Arabs, and into that of the Beni Bu Yahyi, nomadic Riffians. In these countries they suffered greatly from hunger and thirst, especially the latter. There was no longer any food to steal, nor any water.

The men had reached the Jebel Bu Ma'awia near the border of the Metalsa country, and were hiding in juniper bushes on this low mountain. Down below in the glare of the noonday sun they could see a group of several black tents, shimmering in the haze which the sun drew from the already parched ground.

Moh Umzien was watching these tents closely. There lay food and water, but the nomads were armed and the travellers were not, except for the one revolver. The watchers had seen a man ride off on a horse earlier in the day, and two decrepit greybeards drive a flock of sheep out. The old men were now grazing them on a flank of the mountain below them.

The old men directed their charges up higher. The Riffians, seeing this, hid behind rocks and under bushes. Sheep, wandering past them, thrust their muzzles under the bushes and smelt of them, emitting plaintive bleats. When the two old men came up, they were jumped on from behind and seized. Hands were held tightly over their mouths. Their flintlocks were taken from them. While hungry men caught a sheep and slaughtered it, a fire went up, despite all precaution, and bits of mutton, spitted on sticks, commenced sizzling. One sheep was not enough. Three were killed before the men were satisfied.

While this was going on Moh Umzien removed his hand from the mouth of one of the shepherds. The old man commenced a torrent of speech. "Who will pay for these sheep? What kind of bandits are you? These sheep are worth nine dollars apiece."

"Be quiet," said Moh Umzien, "and answer questions."

The old man looked at Moh Umzien's face and stopped talking.

"Where are the rest of your men?" asked Moh Umzien.

"They are in the tents sleeping. If you don't let us go they will catch you and kill all of you. They have horses and guns."

"Tell me the truth," said Moh Umzien. "How would you like to have your feet roasted in that fire, both of you?"

The second shepherd indicated his desire to speak. His mouth was released.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"We are the ones who ask the questions," replied Moh Umzien. "Tell us where the men are, quickly."

"They have gone for water," he replied, "and will be back to-night."

"Who is down there at the tents?"

"Just some children and three women."

"You mean they left you unprotected?"

"The sheikh stayed behind, but rode off this morning to keep watch and will probably come back with the others. The Metalsa are camped by the wells. All our men were needed. It is a dry year."

"Have you any water left in the tents?" asked Moh Umzien.

"Only half a skin."

"Then we will take it. You can wait until to-night."

"No, no," cried the old man. "What if they came back without any?"

"Then half a skin will make no difference."

Moh Umzien and his men ran down the hill toward the tents, taking the two flintlocks with them. They entered the tents at once, looking for the water. In one of the shelters all three women were congregated, standing in the entrance shouting shrill imprecations.

"Get out!" cried one more shrivelled than the rest. "Get away, you robbers!"

She brandished a long knife in one hand, thrusting it toward the men, who dodged each blow. Moh Umzien ran up to her and grasped the hand which held the knife. The woman, who seemed old, was dressed in a single piece of dirty cloth, hitched over the shoulders with brooches. The sides were open, and with her writhing one flat pendulous breast bobbed out. Moh Umzien seized this in his free hand and put the long nipple in his mouth, commencing to suck. He had not expected to draw any milk, but to his surprise some flowed into his mouth.

At this action the three women became quiet. This was a strong shame compulsion, as strong as the slaughtering of a bull.

"Give us your water, little mother," asked Moh Umzien, removing his lips from her breast. "I am your son and you cannot deny me. Your men cannot kill me nor I them, for we are now all one family."

The men now entered the tent without resistance, and drained the half skin of water. This refreshed them considerably and they arose at once to depart. Despite the truce caused by the shame compulsion it would be better to be somewhere else when the men came home.

"May peace be upon you, little mother," cried Moh Umzien in parting. "Your milk is sweet, you are like a fig tree which bears two crops. I will tell Abd el Krim to have you paid for the sheep and for the water."

CHAPTER XXXVI

NO MORE THE SCHOOLMASTER

When Moh Umzien presented himself at the headquarters of Abd el Krim, it was no wonder that he was not recognised. He had a thin growth of straggly beard, his clothes were torn, and he was haggard and weary. The condition of his followers was the same.

"I want to see the Schoolmaster," said Moh Umzien to a guard.

"You mean Our Lord?" the guard retaliated sharply.

"Judgment day will be time enough for that," answered Moh Umzien with a weary smile. "I want to see Abd el Krim. You know whom I mean as well as I do."

"Our Lord is what he is called. I have orders to put every one in jail who uses the other names. Get along!"

Moh Umzien and the forty were hustled to another quadrangle which served as jail. The courtyard was covered with thin, ragged men, plaiting grass sandals, under the eyes of a dozen guards armed with rifles. With a start Moh Umzien recognised Bukkeish among them, apparently in charge. Bukkeish turned his head away immediately, and walked to the other side of the compound. The other guards watched him closely.

Moh Umzien and his companions, finding the jail quadrangle as good as any other place, sat down and rested. Soon a soldier came in and called out a name. A man stood up trembling. He was led out by two

guards, his feet dragging behind him limply, and his lips clenched between his teeth. A moment after the gate had been closed, a shot rang out on the other side of the wall. The prisoners busied themselves with their plaiting. The soldier came in again, and called out another name. A second man went out, his head thrust high in the air, and laughing. He walked without any assistance. Again the gate was closed, and another shot was heard.

When the soldier entered for the third time, Moh Umzien said to him: "Tell Our Lord that I would like to speak to him. I have brought these men from Algeria in accordance with his orders. I did not know that he had changed his name."

The soldier made no reply, but carried out the third execution. In a few moments he again appeared, and said: "You are wanted at headquarters."

Moh Umzien found his chief sitting at a table looking at some papers by the light of a candle. After a moment he turned his head and smiled.

"What is the trouble?" he enquired.

"I brought you the forty men, and when we got here we were thrown into jail because I didn't know that you had changed your name."

"Oh, yes, you had no way of knowing. Remember what to call me after this, in the presence of the men. We must have authority here and organisation. I have a couple of Germans from the Legion who are setting up field telephones at all the important posts. We bought the telephones from Americans in Tangier. Things are changing. We must run this war like an army."

Moh Umzien made no reply.

"Did you see Bukkeish at the jail?" asked the leader.

"I did, but he wouldn't look at me."

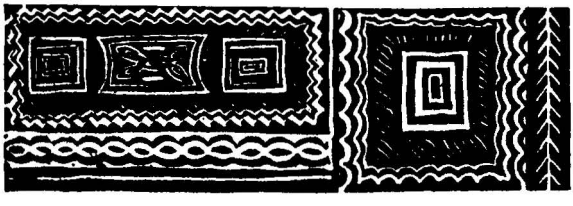
"He is taking it rather hard, but he will have to give in. No army with two heads can be successful. The Spanish themselves have proved that."

"What of my commission?" asked Moh Umzien.

"You are now Captain of a Hundred. Rest up two days with your men, and I will give you others with whom to fill up your company. Then come here, the day after to-morrow at dusk, and I will give you your orders."

At the appointed time Moh Umzien reported, clean shaven now and rested.

"You will take your company to Taghzuth," said Abd el Krim, "and relieve the Captain who is in charge there. He is to go forward to the Wergha. You will administer justice in Taghzuth and shoot any dissenters. Report to me each night by telephone."



CHAPTER XXXVII

TANKS

Moh Umzien's sojourn in Taghzuth was brief but happy. The Malim Mohend, standing in the market place, recognised him as he walked over the bridge of two fir-trunks, at the head of his men. The Malim Mohend wrung his hand and kissed him on the forehead, and bade him make his own house his headquarters. This Moh Umzien refused to do, because the telephone was elsewhere.

If the Taghzuthis were disloyal to Abd el Krim's cause, Moh Umzien saw no evidence of it. He had been sent there to put down any subversive propaganda and to administer justice. During his sojourn in the tree-girt box-like valley, every one seemed to behave and there was no cause to punish any one. Moh Umzien and his friends spent most of their days sitting on the grass by the river, drinking tea, while small boys fanned the flies from their heads with walnut boughs, the leaves of which gave off a sweet odour. There were mulberries to eat, and cherries in plenty.

Moh Umzien soon noticed that his men were having affairs with the Taghzuthi women, and at first forbade this. When he found, however, that most of the Taghzuthis did not object to having their women consort with strangers, he paid no more attention.

The nightly telephone call to Targuist, whence his

report was relayed to Ajdir, and whence orders from Ajdir were given him, was the chief event of each day, and he looked forward to it with pleasure. Although Moh Umzien possessed little vanity, it gave him a certain feeling of progress to be turning the handle of a telephone, and blowing into the transmitter. He had seen people blow into transmitters elsewhere, but did not know why they had done so. At any rate, it seemed part of the ritual and he always did it.

On the eighth night of his stay in Taghzuth, orders came through to move on. "You must leave at once for the Wergha," said the operator. "We are now fighting the French. Trouble started yesterday. We are sending a column through to join you. Go at once and support the men who are there already."

"How did the trouble with the French start?" asked Moh Umzien. "Was it their fault or ours?"

"I am not allowed to give messages other than those ordered."

"Very well," answered Moh Umzien, "but is there no other news? How about Bukkeish?"

"Abd el Krim sent him home two days ago. He took ill on the way and died."

"Oh," said Moh Umzien, and replaced the receiver on its hook.

As he was leaving the telephone house, he saw the Malim Mohend approaching him.

After the old man had greeted him, and Moh Umzien had returned the salutations, the gunsmith said in a tone of some embarrassment: "You may not have noticed it, my son, but next year there will be many blue-eyed children in Taghzuth."

"Not very many," replied Moh Umzien in slight confusion. "We are leaving in the morning."

Malim Mohend's tone of restrained disapproval changed to one of regret.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Southward," Moh Umzien answered. "Other things have happened too," he continued. "Bukkeish has died of poison."

The chief of the gunsmiths shook his head in silence.

The next morning Moh Umzien set out with his men across Ktama, leaving a small garrison to await the column. They spent the day crossing the hot mountain sides and walking beneath cork trees, which gave little shade. In two days they had arrived at the banks of the broad, muddy Wergha, where they were forded across on mules left there with men for that purpose. They passed an empty French pillbox on a low hill near by.

Ahead of them lay undulating country, covered with the stubble of harvest. Hills here and there, breaking up the monotony of the landscape, were topped with clumps of trees. As the men proceeded they heard the rumble of small artillery, and drawing closer heard the crackle of rifle fire and the patter of machine guns. An occasional dull detonation indicated the explosion of a hand grenade. As they drew nearer they scattered and ran bent over.

Looking up to see what lay ahead of them, they saw two rows of shallow trenches, the nearest occupied by Urriaghlis and by a variegated assembly of local inhabitants who had been pressed into service. They fell on their faces now and crawled carefully into the trench.

Taking up places among the others, they commenced firing at whatever targets presented themselves.

This battle prolonged itself for several days. The Riffians gained ground rapidly, however, and pushed the French back to within a short distance of Fez. Moh Umzien could see the houses of el Hajeb in the distance, and some of his kinsmen crept through the lines to join them. When Moh Umzien inquired for Mimun, his father, he was told that the old man was ill.

It looked as if the French would have to evacuate Fez. If this had happened the Riffians could have cut Morocco in two, caused a general uprising, and might possibly have expelled the French. However, orders came through from headquarters to withhold the attack until another column should arrive. Insane as these orders appeared, the Captains did not disobey them. Reinforcements came first to the French, who were in reality holding Fez with but a small garrison. False information as to the size of their forces had been responsible for the orders delaying the Riffians.

When the French received their reinforcements, they attacked vigorously both from the land and from the air, and the Riffians found it necessary to retreat. This, be it said to their credit, they did in orderly fashion. When at length they had regained hilly country in which they felt more at home, they dug themselves in again and withstood attack.

One morning Moh Umzien and his men, those who were left of them, beheld a strange sight ahead. Two great iron boxes, painted with stripes in browns and greys, lumbered toward them, moving on jointed bands. This was the first that the Riffians had seen of tanks, and

most of the men did not know what they were. As the boxes approached, the men found that their bullets made no impression on them. Hence they concentrated their fire on the joints and on the slits from which protruded the guns.

As the tanks drew within fifty feet of the trench, the Riffians arose with loud cries and rushed at them, brandishing knives. In this foolhardy gesture many of them fell, cut down by machine-gun fire. Over a dozen, however, reached the tanks and got too close to them to be shot at. They pried at the doors with their knives, and got the door of one of them open. A clip of revolver bullets was fired from inside. Two men reached in and knifed the occupants, who died screaming.

Since the door of the other tank could not be opened, ten men rolled it on its side, reaching under it and straining mightily. At length it rose and fell over, and the Riffians could hear the two men who composed its crew cursing in French. Once the tank lay on its side and the guns had been put out of commission, the attackers commenced battering it with large stones. Moh Umzien was one of the men who tipped this tank over. By some miracle he had avoided injury in approaching it, although the ground was covered with his men, some still and others crawling. Moh Umzien had tried to prevent his men from rushing on the tanks, but once he had realised that he could not stop them, he had gone with them.

Before the Riffians had done much damage to the tank with their stones, a shell fell a few yards off and exploded. The attackers dropped to the ground and lay still. They started to crawl back to shelter, when

another shell landed, nearer the tanks. At the same time that he heard the detonation, Moh Umzien felt a sharp blow hit him on the left thigh, on the side, halfway between hip and knee.

He tried to drag this leg forward in crawling, but it would not come. A sharp pain leaped up to his spine, and Moh Umzien gritted his teeth. Never had he felt such a pain before, not even when the wild boar had gored him. He put his hand down to his leg, and could feel a mangled hole in it. He looked down, and could see the splintered end of his thighbone showing white where it had thrust itself through a bleeding pulp of flesh. Out of the side of the wound blood was flowing in a stream, spurting on the ground.

Moh Umzien tried to rise on his left side, but his strength left him. The brown earth and blue sky turned over and over before his eyes, and a mist came in front of them. Through the mist he could see the face of Bukkeish, wrenched in anguish, Bukkeish's hand clutched at the throat of this face, the hand with broad, flat fingernails. Bukkeish's mouth opened wide, and the stubs of decayed teeth showed inside. Bukkeish vomited, and a snake crawled out of his mouth, as Bukkeish's eyes opened wide and their pupils dilated.

Two of Moh Umzien's kinsmen crawled out of their haven and dragged him back into safety. It was the first time that Moh Umzien had ever been made to lose consciousness, and his rescuers shook their heads at each other gravely.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE BIRTH OF A WARRIOR

Months later a thin, anxious-looking man, his face bleached free of sunburn, hobbled down the Vale of Iherrushen, leaning heavily on a cane. Moh Umzien's shattered thighbone had not been properly attended to. Si Alush had been killed and there was no one else who could have done it. It had set crookedly, so that his left leg was bowed and shortened. On top of that a fever had set in, and he had lost much flesh and been slow to recover.

As he walked through the village of Tarosht, only dogs and women greeted him, for the men were away fighting. The women desired news, and it was hard to satisfy them before moving on. When he reached Mukudem and stood on the north bank of the stream away from the mosque, he saw a company of old men sitting on the porch of that edifice. One of them, bent and ancient, he recognised as his grandfather, Haddu of Beni Tadmut, he who had protected him from the wrath of his kinsmen when Moh Umzien was a baby.

"Ho, Moh Umzien," cried Haddu in a voice now become thin and warbly. "Where did you leave your leg?"

"Up in the Wergha country," replied his grandson. "Have you got one to loan me?"

"You had better hurry home," shouted Haddu, "your wife is having a baby."

"What, now?"

"Yes, to-day."

The blood rushed to Moh Umzien's head. He grasped his stick so firmly that the pink of his fingernails turned white. He broke into a shuffling run, leaping with his right leg and dragging his left along while half vaulting on his stick. His rifle, strapped to his back, flapped dangerously.

He coursed in this fashion through Beni Tadmut without speaking to any one. His lips were pressed tightly together and his eyes looked only at the ground ahead of him which it was his immediate task to traverse. At length he came to his own house, and dropped exhausted into the courtyard. This was filled with women, many of whom were passing in and out the door of the small room on the uphill side of the house. Lying on his back with his legs spread out, Moh Umzien panted for breath, while the women knelt around him, bathing his head with cold water, and holding his hands. One of them lifted his shoulders so that he might be given a drink from a curve-mouthed bowl.

"Is it born yet?" he panted.

"Not yet," was the answer. "Listen."

From the door issued moans which grew more frequent in interval and louder. The lowered murmuring of the attendant women made itself heard throughout.

"I am all right now," said Moh Umzien, sitting up, "attend to my wife, not to me."

The women in the courtyard entered the other room of the house and joined those already there who were

preparing a feast. The smell of goat-meat stew, intended for kuskus, drifted through the door and made Moh Umzien hungry. Soon the old men whom Moh Umzien had passed at Mukudem appeared and sat down in the courtyard. They all bore flintlocks and bags of powder.

Inside the room in which the birth was taking place, the women witnessing the event sat around the walls, leaving a narrow passage free to the door. On the floor in the middle of the room lay a large woman, on her back, and Moh Umzien's wife Hadisha lay on top of the other woman in the same position. The large woman was clasping the mother about the abdomen with her hands, while Moh Umzien's mother, tall and stately as ever, performed the actual work of the delivery.

When the baby had been born she severed the umbilical cord with a pair of scissors, and bathed the child with a handful of clean wool, which she dipped in a bowl of boiled olive oil. Having wrapped the child in a woollen cloth she handed it to a second woman, and herself carried out the umbilical cord, buried in a bowl of earth in which two eggs had been broken, in order to hide this bowl and its contents in some secret place. She took a hoe with her, to dig a hole for the pot. These severed portions of the child's early anatomy would make fine magical ingredients should any student find them, and she must preserve her grandson from any occult charm. There would be enough trouble for him in life from natural causes alone.

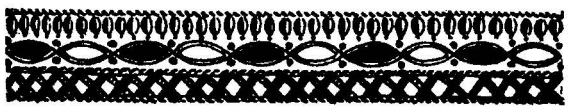
As soon as the sex of the child had been determined, a woman thrust her head out of the door and announced: "A boy has been born."

The men had been waiting for this with anxiety, and held their flintlocks ready in their withered arms. At once they fired a volley, which echoed up the valley and set the dogs to barking. Moh Umzien's eyes gleamed and his drawn cheeks rounded into a smile. He fired a clip rapidly from his repeating rifle, while the old men were reloading. He inserted a second clip and discharged that.

The old men laughed and shouted at Moh Umzien: "If only your grandfather the Malim Hamidu were here this day! You can teach your son to shoot when we are gone! The Christians will never take us if such as this are born!"

The mention of his grandfather brought to Moh Umzien's mind the memory, hazy as it was and perhaps embellished by later telling, of the day when his father had first taught him to fire a gun, and when the Malim Hamidu and Amar the Scabhead had been carried into the room. The scene in his other grandfather's house then came to him, and he glanced at old Haddu sitting across the courtyard from him, smiling in unconcealed joy. He looked down at his left leg and tears came to his eyes. It was then that his mother came out carrying the pot.

"He is blond," she said, "with blue eyes like his mother's. Yet he has something about him of his great-uncle, Ali the Yellowhaired, who died in Fez. His eyes slant a little like a jackal's. He will be a fine fighter."



CHAPTER XXXIX

AN END OF CHILDREN

Forty days after the birth of his son, Moh Umzien went into the room in which his wife had been delivered. He had often heard her voice from the doorway, but had not spoken, for in that part of the Rif custom forbids any communion between man and wife until this length of time has passed.

He entered at night time, and found her squatting on the floor on a pile of blankets, nursing her child. Her yellow hair lay behind her in two long braids, and her small nose and soft lips, he noticed with a renewal of emotion, were as beautiful as ever. The baby took its mouth from its mother's nipple, and turned its head toward its father. Moh Umzien saw that Hadisha's breast, distended with milk and heavy-tipped, swelled out from her body in an even shapelier curve than on that day when he had first seen her, lying in terror on the floor of her father's house.

"I will sit down behind you and keep still," he said, "until you have finished nursing."

When he had lowered himself awkwardly into place, stretching his bad leg out in front of him, the baby resumed its meal. It drank until, glutted with food, its head fell back in sleep. Hadisha arose, wrapped the child in a blanket, and laid it gently on a corner of the floor. She blew out the candle which burned in a niche

of the wall, and crawled in the darkness to her husband.

The two arranged the blankets, and lay down together. Moh Umzien took her face between his hands and commenced kissing her. After a few moments she pushed him away gently, and whispered, "Be careful of me, my breasts are sore."

Moh Umzien lay quietly beside her, and after a few minutes felt her hand creeping over his thigh. He reached down and twined his fingers in hers, and pushed her hand away.

"Don't feel of that place," he whispered. "It is broken and twisted. It's not a pleasant thing to touch."

Hadisha kissed him, and replied, "Never mind that. You have come back to me, and you are still alive. That is all I care about now."

She released her fingers from his grasp, and once more they commenced creeping across his thigh.

"Don't," he whispered. "We will never sleep together again."

Hadisha rose up on one elbow, and asked out loud, "Why not? Have you found another woman?"

"No other at all," replied Moh Umzien, "but we must beget no more children."

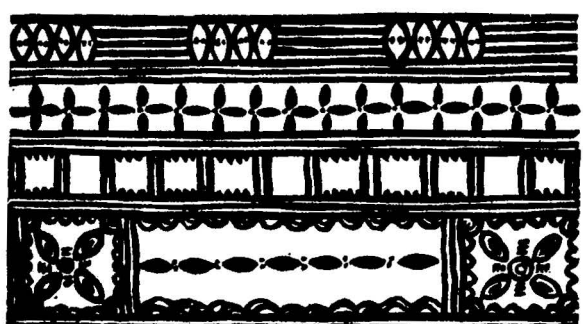
Amazement entered her voice, as she asked, "Why no more—aren't you pleased with this one?"

"I am too pleased with him," he said, "to wish to see him in slavery. Our time is short now. The Christian is gaining, and there is no resistance which will hold him. Soon you will see him striding down the valley, with a whip in his hand, and men cowering before him. Do you want sons, to live and die under the lash? No, it is

better to consider ourselves an old man and an old woman."

Hadisha lay quiet for a moment, and then seized him in both arms, and kissed him behind his ear.

"Don't worry," she whispered. "We can go without children and still not be old. There is a woman in the village who sells herbs. Everything will be all right. It is wrong to talk with men about this, but now the world is different."



CHAPTER XL

THE GUEST OF GOD

Several years passed. Moh Umzien stayed at home, for he was no longer any use in fighting, unless he should be besieged in his own house. His leg grew no better, and it was difficult for him to walk. He could no longer plough, but was of some help in the reaping and threshing. Having little else to do, he spent much time in carpentry, adzing out ploughs and building the wooden parts of a new olive press. The spoons which he shaved out with a small adze were much sought after.

Meanwhile the war went on, and the fortunes of the Riffians steadily declined. The Spaniards, although not gaining in the east, landed at the promontory north of Ajdir, and forced Abd el Krim to move to Targuist where he could carry on his leadership undisturbed. The French gradually pushed northward from Fez and Taza, and the southern portion of the Gzennaya was already in their control. A truce was called, and Abd el Krim sent an emissary to Ujda, but to no avail, for the Riffians refused to surrender and the Christians refused to recognise their independence; hence the fight began over again. It was harder and harder now to obtain munitions since the Tangier entry had been closed, and the coast was well patrolled. In the villages there were few animals left to be eaten, and the grain-pits and raisin-baskets were almost empty. Up on the mountains the

old men and some of the women were hunting wild boar.

Abd el Krim, at length realising the futility of further fighting, agreed to surrender, in order that as few as possible of his remaining followers be killed. The men of Gzennaya, furious at him for what they considered his treason, joined the French and marched on Targuist to capture him. When he had given himself up they returned home quietly, vowing the while to carry on the fight independently until the last of them had been killed. The French could have an empty valley, but no one would be alive to see them when they strode heavy-footed into Abd el Mumen's mosque.

Moh Umzien knew of these things by report, and grew gradually more bitter. Meanwhile his father had died in Fez. The sight of his twisted leg infuriated him as he looked down at its grotesque contours, and through shame he spoke less with his womenfolk, who were now absent most of the days searching for wild herbs and tubers on the mountain, to be eaten in place of better food. His son was now able to walk, and could chatter rapidly, concerning himself chiefly with the thin puppies which had just been born.

The men of Iherrushen and Ikhuanen, returned from Targuist, prepared themselves for resistance. And then, a few days after their arrival, a column of the Foreign Legion, tattered and thirsty, straggled up the Bayu into the river bottom of Tiddest. They had lost their way and were trying to reach Aknul, where the French headquarters in the southern Gzennaya had been established.

As these legionaries threw off their packs and commenced setting up their tents, the men of Tiddest

watched them through cracks in their doors. When camp had been pitched the men came down to them, selling them at high prices some of the little food which they still possessed. At dusk some of the men of Tiddest talked to them.

"The Beni Tuzin are at war with us," they said, "and attack us every night. Stay in your tents and we will protect you, for we know when the Beni Tuzin will attack, and we can hold them off alone. You would only be in the way. Stand ready to come out and help if they break through."

Guards were posted up by the Rock of the Ogress, and down the Bayu. When it was completely dark, a series of loud detonations was heard, coming from the tents. Some one was rolling hand grenades under the flaps.

The legionaries burst out in terror and ran, by the dim light of the half-concealed moon, up the water of Bayu toward the Iherrushen, falling over rocks and toppled by rifle fire. Those of them who were left continued running until they came to the confluence of the Bayu and the Iherrushen. Looking up the Bayu, they saw its steep sides and boulder-strewn bottom. At the right were houses, those of the Ulad Abd el Mumen. Deciding that it would be impossible to ascend the Bayu, they ran up the right bank toward the houses.

The colonel and a dozen of his men staggered to Moh Umzien's door, upon which they beat with their fists. The others, preferring to take their chances in the open, ran through the village and up the valley, being fired upon frequently. Few of them reached the pass at the top of it.

"I am the guest of God!" cried the colonel in Arabic, as he beat on the door. "I am the guest of God! Open and give me shelter!"

The door yielded suddenly as the prop was removed, and the colonel and his men fell forward on the floor. Gathering themselves up, they saw a man standing before them, leaning on a cane, to support a leg which did not match its fellow. A twisted smile lay on Moh Umzien's face.

"I should kill you at once," he said quietly, "but you have asked for hospitality and I cannot refuse it. If I came to your door in this manner, you would tell your servants to boot me out through the gate."

"Never," cried the colonel, with a pleading expression. "You will be my guest whenever you wish. When the war is over, you shall come to my house, and everything in it will be yours!"

"Come in and stop lying," ordered Moh Umzien. "Let me shut the door before some one shoots you through the crack."

The soldiers withdrew hastily from the neighbourhood of the door. After shutting it, Moh Umzien handed them water, which they drank in great gulps. Their shoes were covered with mud, which dirtied the floor. The soldiers talked to each other eagerly, in French, in Russian, and in German.

When they had rested, Moh Umzien fed them and gave them tea. He was interrupted many times during the night by men whispering through the crack in the shutter.

"Moh Umzien," they said, "let us in to kill them. You do not have to give hospitality to Christians."

"Get away," replied Moh Umzien. "The law is the law and when I break it I will die of shame. These are my guests and if you want them you will have to kill me first."

In the morning Moh Umzien hobbled out on his cane, carrying his rifle, and the soldiers following him. He walked between the houses, and no one came out of doors. Up through Beni Tadmut he walked, past Mukudem and into Tarosht. The men kept together in a small group, so close that they were constantly stepping on each other's heels. The dogs of Tarosht assailed them in a body, smelling for the first time the odour of Christians. Moh Umzien laid about him with his stick, and the men kicked at them. Up through Telmest they travelled, and over the divide into sight of Temjunt, where the French camp was visible. Ahead of them were stationed pickets.

"Come into camp with me," said the colonel, "and I will reward you. You are a fine fellow. I will remember you after your people have submitted."

"No," replied Moh Umzien. "I have set too many traps to walk into one myself. And furthermore I don't care whether you think I am a fine fellow or not."

He then turned and made his way back to the pass. Hence he limped slowly down the valley to his own house. No one spoke to him on the way.

CHAPTER XLI

THE OGRESS CRUMBLES

Several months later, the Ulad Abd el Mumen and the Beni Tadmut, what men remained to them alive and out of jail, were squatting unarmed under the olive trees by the brook of Tlat, conversing dejectedly. It seemed as if the end of the world had come. These men could not conceive of themselves being subjected to any authority other than their own. They had been disarmed, their councils had been dissolved, and sheikhs had been appointed over them, sheikhs who before the war had been men whom no one considered worthy of mention, men who had sold cloth in markets, who had failed to avenge adultery, who had taken blood money without attempt at reciprocation. Also there were spies among them, others of the same ilk who ran tattling to Bured and Aknul, repeating conversations, inventing others, and revealing the locations of buried guns.

A young man was talking. "Si Haddush of Temjunt is in jail."

"What happened to him?" asked Moh Umzien.

"The French have built a road by his house; it passes close to his front door. The other day his wife was standing in the door watching while soldiers marched by. They were whistling to her, and crying: 'Ha, Fatma! Come sleep with me at the camp!' 'Throw me a kiss!'

'Come up to the camp, Fatma, and I will give you a bottle of wine!'

"Although she could not understand the words, she enjoyed the attention she was receiving, and giggled and blushed and called back. Si Haddush was in the house, and he heard it. 'Come in the house and close the door!' he ordered. His wife did not come. He carried her in, and beat her with a stick. In the night she ran away to Aknul and told the French where he had buried his guns. They came yesterday morning and dug them up.

"There were twelve rifles, a thousand rounds of cartridges, three machine guns, a box of machine-gun belts, and twenty hand grenades. They tied Si Haddush with a rope and threw him in a truck on top of the guns. The truck went down to Aknul, and Si Haddush crawled to the edge and looked over. He saw his wife sitting on the bench between two mokhaznis, who had their arms around her. Si Haddush commenced shouting at her, but some one struck him on the mouth. He crawled back and lay down, for he was greatly ashamed. Then the truck started up again, and carried him toward Taza."

Shortly after the completion of this tale a loud explosion boomed forth from the direction of Tiddest. The men, turning their heads to look, saw a white cloud of smoke and dust rising.

"They have blown up something big," said an old man.

Soon a dozen Arab mokhaznis, mounted on horses, rode up the valley in the dry river bottom, and seeing the men under the trees, rode over to them, their blue silhams flapping behind them. One of the Arabs who was

a sergeant spurred his horse up the bank, holding its head high with the bridle, and rode into the midst of the seated men. Over his shoulder he carried a short cavalry rifle on a strap, and a leather whip hung from the wrist of his right hand.

Drawing a paper from his scrip he read off a list of names. Among them was that of Moh Umzien.

"Get up, you!" he shouted. "Come down to Tiddest to work! We have blown up the big rock, and you must break it up with hammers, to be burnt for lime. Get up and start moving!"

"So the Ogress has crumbled," said Moh Umzien in his own language.

"The jinn that lived under it must have fled, and the souls of men are flying after it. What fools men are to beget sons into slavery!"

"Get up and stop talking!" ordered the sergeant. "What did you say?"

Moh Umzien looked at the sergeant and smiled, then said in Arabic: "I said that your mother was a bitch, and that you were suckled on pig's milk."

The sergeant flushed and smote out with his whip. The thong curled many times around Moh Umzien's body. He spared his face by shielding it with his arm. When at length the Arab desisted, Moh Umzien staggered to his feet, picked his staff from the ground, and hobbled down the valley with his companions.

Moh Umzien was surprised at himself, as he proceeded painfully downward, that he had given in. He could not at first understand why he had not fought back and been killed by the mokhazni. He had a sick feeling in his stomach, and a great lump stood in his throat. This

was the end of all things; from now on men would walk and work as in an evil dream, and his son would know the thrill of battle and the confidence of action only by hearsay.

Moh Umzien would tell his son tales of olden times, so that he would be proud to be a Riffian, even though others might despise him. Perhaps his son would not believe him. A feeling of inferiority smote Moh Umzien as he thought of these things. He who had been so proud, the son of a family which had fought and been defeated but which had never yielded, was shuffling down to Tiddest to crush the broken remnants of the Ogress.

Moh Umzien looked at each familiar rock, and at each bush and tree. He knew these things; they were part of him. He glanced up at the slopes of the mountains on either side. Here Abd el Mumen had felled the trees and hence had fled the lion and the hyæna. Perhaps his son would not believe about Abd el Mumen either. The rest of the way to Tiddest, Moh Umzien looked only at the bed of the stream, and walked with great effort.